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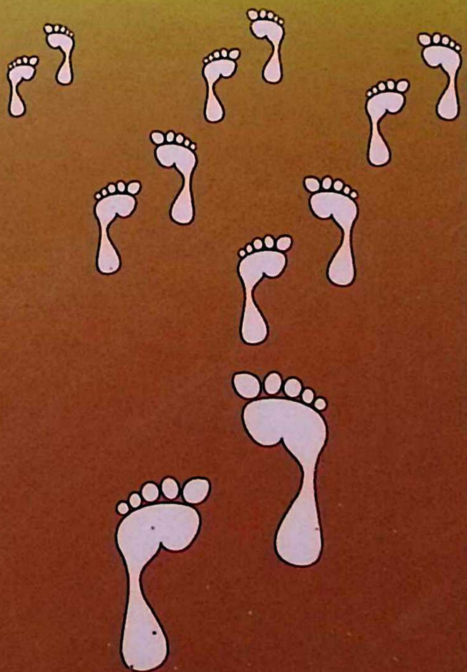

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The Journal of Centre for Studies in Civilizations, Sandhān, is a biannual journal. It accepts and publishes original articles from scholars and intellectuals in areas of interdisciplinary studies and civilizational dialogues.

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The Centre for Studies in Civilizations brings out the issues of *Sandhan* – an interdisciplinary journal that takes into account the larger civilizational discourse with which the Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC) is concerned. *Sandhan* has been in the forefront of the civilizational dialogue in India right from its inaugural issue. The present volume continues with the same spirit in projecting the conceptual issues pertaining to the domain of the philosophy, history, culture, science and social sciences from the civilizational perspective.

As always, we are grateful to all subscribers of *Sandhan* who continue to encourage us in our endeavours. We are in the process of publishing the delayed issues of this journal during this calendar year.

D.P. CHATTOPADHYAYA
Editor

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Sandhān, Vol. X, No. 2, July–December 2010

ARTICLES

Ch. Manihar Singh

Early Manipuri Literature—A Review

INTRODUCTION

Manipur, a small state in the eastern border of India, is in the lap of nature as the lush green valley, traversed by rivers and rivulets emptying into the ever glittering Loktak Lake, is surrounded by folds of blue mountain ranges. According to Dr. G.A. Grierson, the Manipuris along with other groups of people now settled in North East India hailed from the head-waters of Yangtze and Hoyang Ho rivers in South West China. And their recorded history dates back to 33 A.D. as evidenced by the royal chronicle the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. The valley was carved up into seven independent principalities represented by clan dynasties. On account of their superiority in strength and intelligence, the Meiteis of the Ningthouja clan emerged triumphant in their age- old struggle for dominance. Thus by the turn of the 17th century the composite Meitei community or people emerged. And they are the majority of the Manipuries in the state.

The present name of the state is of comparatively recent origin dating from the eighteenth century only as one Shantidas Goswami, a Vaisnav preacher hailing from Sylhet pointed it out as the Manipur of the *Mahabharata*. Officially it was first mentioned by Mr. Veriest of the East India Company in his letter to the king of Manipur in 1762. Prior to this, the region was known by different names to the neighbouring states and it lost its independence to the mighty British in 1891 A.D.

Language and Script

Apart from the Meiteis inhabiting the valley, there are many tribes exceeding more than the 33 officially recognised, settling in the surrounding mountains. As such, there are a number of dialects which cannot be recognised by speakers of one another. But since time immemorial, Manipuri has been the lingua franca of the state as through it political administration and commercial transactions were carried out.

Beginning with Houghton Hodgson, scholars have placed Manipuri in the Tibeto-Burmese group of languages. And Dr. Grierson is of the view that its affinity with the Tibeto Burman languages is more keenly observed in relation with Kachin. Legends, songs and MSS found in the language evidently prove its long and sustained existence. By the close of the 17th century, Manipuri came into contact with other Indo-Aryan languages and while many of the vocables of the latter have been adopted, their use has been mostly on the pattern of simultaneous placing of two synonyms that is a Sanskrit or Bengali word followed by its Manipuri equivalent. And those newly borrowed are more or less confined to words of abstract significance only. Thus the impact of other advanced languages was negligible.

The Meitei or Manipuri language had its own script which has an apparent semblance to that of the Tibetan. That the Manipuri script evolved out of the Brahmi is quite evident and there are four sub-branches of the Brahmi, two of which spread to North-East and North India. And the early sub-branch which spread to North India is the Gupta, the off-shoots of which included the Tibetan, the Siddhamatraka and the Sarada characters. Then, should not Meitei script be nearer to the branch of Brahmi which spread to North India than the one to North-East India? Taking into account the written and epigraphical evidences, it can be assumed that Manipuri alphabet evolved between the 12th and 15th centuries. And it is interesting how the MS *Mayek Laisak Khangba* ('Study of Alphabet) gives an account of the 35-letters. MSS written in the old script covering different subjects collected till now number more than one thousand written on indigenous paper made out of a particular long grass or agarbak, the bark of agar tree with a painstakingly prepared black ink. Each MSS is believed to last between two hundred to three hundred years. They were used to be collected and safely kept in charge of an institute of scholars in the royal palace and also in individual custody of pundits.

Literature

Pre-Hindu Manipuri literature extending upto the 17th century may be said to form the Early Period of the literature, songs composed or works produced till the close of the 17th century were anonymous and bore no dates of composition as the works were attributed to the royal institute. Therefore to arrange them in a chronological order is an uphilltask. However the guiding principles adopted for our purpose are: (a) the degree of archaism of the language, (b) comparative antiquity of the theme, (c) absence of alien words, particularly Indo-Aryan and (d) style of composition.

It is a known fact that Manipuri language did not have contact with any developed language so as to be influenced by its literature as Oriya, Bengali and Assamese were the direct descendants of Magadh Prakrta. Therefore, literatures of these languages bore the characteristics of a classical literature. Ritual songs and hymns may be said to have ushered in the dawn of early Manipuri poetry or for that matter, Manipuri literature and they may not be regarded as 'standard literature'. But taking into account the beauty of diction, the pace of lines and the matter of rhythm they cannot be denied as the proper elements of literature.

In this connection, *Lai Haraoba,* a religious and social festival is the veritable source of a variety of songs. Of them that are indispensably associated with it are 'Ougri' 'Khencho', 'Anoirol' and 'Lairemma Paosa. They are found included in the text of *Panthoipi Khongkul,* a rare MS on the love legend of Panthoipi and Nongpok Ningthou. The first as in Vedic verses, describes the various appellations of the sun and also an incident that took place at the creation of the earth. The lines with their vowel harmonies and matching consonants always have an unfailingly eerie charm. 'Khencho' is equally noted for its graceful musical cadences arising out of the modulating sound of stately consonants. 'Lairemma Paosa' and 'Anoirol' are of comparatively simple diction and the first is a pungent love-repartee. This jolly song is rendered by men and women with apt frolicking movements in a buoyant tone. The second is a long composition sung with a strung musical instrument called *Pena* in brisk measures describing evolution of dance in different ages.

Besides these ritual songs and others associated with *Lai Haraoba,* there is 'Hijan Hirao' a long narrative poem laden with deep human sentiment in the form of pathetic fallacy over and above its musical charm. Here is the cry of the hillside in the form of a mother crying for the departing child, the tree:

At dead of night
The mother who begot the tree
And the mother of all trees,
The queen of the hill range
And the mistress of the gorges
Took the tall and graceful tree
To her bosom and wailed.
"O my son, tall and big,
While yet an infant, a sapling
Didn't I tell you
To be an ordinary tree
* * *
At daybreak, hacked at the trunk
You will be found prostrate,
No longer will you respond
To your mother's call
Nor a likeness of you
Shall be found, when I survey
The whole hill-side.
Who shall now relieve my grief?

Among the remaining ritual songs, 'Yakeiba' and 'Kumdamsei' stand out prominently. In the first, the opening eighteen lines describe the gilded lofty peak. From behind it the luminary emerges with its radiant and piercing rays or like the gentle unfolding of golden lotus petals or like the raising of a golden curtain. Then a captivating survey of how the day breaks in the hills and the plains and the neighbouring country Kabaw (Burma) interspersed with regional legends follows. Thus there are a few lovely songs of the awakening of dawn.

The latter that is 'Kumdamsei' literally meaning the song that ushers in a new season stands for the culmination of a protracted evolution of ritual songs. Here in 485 lines the bard sings of the joy of creation, of the beautiful earth and the sky of the romantic legend of Khongchumnubi, a star in the sky and her mates. There are also lines in the midst of these that abound in philosophical and moral teachings.

Hymns

Before the evolution of a mature form of faith, the early Manipuris, as any other people, worshipped natural objects and the spirits haunting them. At the same time, they practised to worship their ancestors too. As the diverse social observances gave birth to a number of ritual songs so did the faith and the concomitant occasions to hymns. To cite a few of them that draw our attention are : (a) 'Sana Lamok' (Prayer to Lord Pakhangba, one of the two presiding deities of the Meiteis), 'Mei' (a ditty sung at the worship of the fire-god), 'Nonglao Eesei' an amusing song to be rendered in group at the time of severe drought invoking the rain to come down in torrents as done once in the past. All these songs have the characteristics of careful composition and are delightful to sing.

By the end of the 17th century composition of such ritual songs and hymns has come to a close. On the appearance of Hinduism, they were no longer encouraged.

Works on Heroism

The clan dynasties were often engaged in constant destructive feuds. The people of each kingdom, had to necessarily become fighters irrespective of age or status of life. The more alert, the more skilful and the more gifted with strength was a people, the greater was the chance of its survival. Therefore a cult of heroism flourished which was sometimes pursued to its extreme end amounting to barbarism.

The unknown writers of the early period gave varied and colourful accounts of such heroic lives in (a) *Chengleiron* (b) *Tutenglon,* (c) *Numit Kappa* (d)

Thawanthaba Hiran (e) Chainarol and (f) Nongsamei

(a) *Chengleiron,* literally meaning a narrative of the Chenglei clan, is essentially the bizarre legend of Chingjin Naran

Panganba born of Thangvi Khongjromba, king of the Chengleis. The name of the child has since been used figuratively to denote any person or extraordinary strength. Therefore the writer concludes

O Great king ... this story of days gone by is the first of its kind and shall ever remain immortal for generations to come.

The writer's mastery over language and insight into human character is quite evident.

(b) *Tutenglong* is the saga of two Meitei princes; Yoimongba and Taothingmang, who took upon themselves the superhuman task of dredging the channels of the biggest and longest rivers in Manipur and also of doing away with the monstrous bird Kakyen Mingamba with their sword and arrow. The prose though a bit pedestrian has charming passages.

(c) *Numit Kappa* is an interesting work of the period and the title literally means the shooting down of the sun. Though to be accepted with a modicum of disbelief the presentation is allegorical as the service of a lone attendant of two princes being over exploited. He ultimately revolted taking first the life of the elder prince while the younger made good his escape for dear life. Despite the presence of political overtone the human touches can make the story stand on its own.

(d) *Thawanthaba Hiran* is a tragedy arising out of a crime spurred by intense jealousy and is the first work to usher in realism in early Manipuri literature. By a strange arrangement the two kings of the Meiteis and the Khumans during a piping time of peace, took in marriage each other's daughter. But the Meitei king got suspicious of the fidelity of his young queen and put her to a cruel death by piercing a piece of sharp iron on her head. Having learnt the inhuman act of the Meitei king the Khumans took revenge upon his daughter in the same manner. Fierce battles followed and the Khumans were severely routed. Based on history, the plot is the handiwork of a creative mind with fantasy being entirely dispensed with. The poet writes with a flourish and the grandiose style can be discerned right from the beginning.

(e) *Chainarol* (An account of combats) reaffirms the tradition of bellicosity among the clan dynasties. Here fighting is mainly for the sake of it though honour may be attributed to as the primary motive. In short, wager of life was the fond pastime of these valiant souls. Of the twenty-seven stories, collected from real-life incidents, each story, some of them consisting only a few lines, is complete by itself. The narrative is swift having no aberration and the diction is comparatively simple, (f) *Nongsamei* has the characteristics of a chronicle as it contains the accounts of the Meitei kings , but the work itself is mainly devoted to recounting the achievement of King Khagemba in his historic fights with the Cacharis, the Muslim merceneries, the Burmese and the tribals in the adjoining hills. The work is, indeed the culmination of a long line of heroic accounts and its title Nongsamei meaning a 'lion-like man' is after the person who saved the life of the Meitei king. No doubt the language is closer to prose, yet it seems to be employed thus so as to effectively convey the crowded elements of the story at a rapid but smooth pace.

Romantic tales

Just as heroism was the prime cult of the people for generations, love in its highest form was another cherished by them. Apart from giving birth to a number of super heroic characters, so did to many a worshipper of love endowed with rare qualities. This primordial feeling had different manifestations and the course of true love, as is generally known, never ran smooth. Apart from social and family impediments, in many of the stories, there were forces which are beyond ordinary mortal's ken. The following stories exemplify the tortuous courses of love.

(a) *Nungpan Ponpi Luwaopa* is love fulfilled after a near-tragic event and is unique of its kind. The leading character of the same name was a Luwang prince and he met Koupru Namoinu at her father's place on the Koupru Hill and instantly fell for her. An arranged pompous marriage took place. But Koubru Namoinu was formerly the spouse of Leinung Thongaren the god of death that strayed from her companions during a sojourn to earth. When her soul was called back by her husband, the prince begged her from the great god. When granted she revived after a state of lifelessness. Thus they lived happily ever after for 100 years.

(b) *Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba* is a tragedy resulting from circumstances which are not the making of the characters. While Hongnemvoi Khunjao, the Meitei prince was staying with Petanga Liklu Louthibi, daughter of the Langmai chief reigning on the slopes of the Langmai Hill armed men of the latter traversed through the Meitei kingdom while going for a raid on the Kouba Ching. On their return, the Meitei king ambushed and put the Langmais to the Meitei swords. To avoid retribution of the hills-men, Petanga directed her husband the Meitei prince to take shelter in the realm of the Khuman chief, who again sent the Meitei prince to the Luwang king for studying Meitei lores. Before parting she wangled out of the Meitei prince to recognise her as his wife before the Meitei community. But on the sudden expiry of the Meitei king, the prince was summoned by his mother and placed on the throne. Being apprised, Petanga herself appeared before the new king who was found seated with the daughter of the Khuman chief as his queen. Whereupon Petanga broken-hearted, took her own life and her soul took its abode at a glade near the Langmai Hills.

(c) *Khonchumnupi Nongkarol* is a story of love which baffles one's attempt to name it either as a tragedy or a comedy. Once six beautiful girls belonging to the Luwang community, from unavoidable circumstances, spent a night with six Haoku youths at a fishing weir. The next morning, on their return home, the respective family members of the girls harshly treated them for their obstinacy which turned out unbearable for them. As promised to the boys, they headed for the heavenly abode, where the boys joined them. As condescended by the god, they visit the earth once a year to fulfil their love.

(d) *Panthoibi Khongkul* portrays tempestuous love against age-old barrier of social custom and physical obstacles. Legend has it that Panthoipi a Meitei princess of immaculate beauty was married to a Khaba prince born of Manu Teknga, the queen and Khaba Sokchrongba the king in a gorgeous and expensive manner as desired by the bride. But Panthoipi turned out a woman of independent will unmindful of her family obligations roaming freely across meadows and sporting in the river water.

In such an escapade, she happened to meet the handsome Kainou Chingsomba, Lord of the Langmai Hills and indulged in amorous tryst. Before long she had eloped with her paramour to the tall hills, beyond the reach of the Khabas. There, other divine beings junior to Kainou Chingsomba celebrated the union of the two by performing dances and music, which merriment the Khabas too re-enacted in their region after realising the true nature of Panthoipi and Kainou Chingsompa. Here the writer can describe the love tryst of the characters without any inhibition. *Panthoibi Naheirol* a shorter work, presents the love-lorn Panthoipi in a very realistic and equally amusing manner. As her love with Nongpok Ningthou became tense as to attract wrath of her in-laws, she left them and took shelter in her mother's place. On her persistent request her mother proposed three powerful gods as her physicians. But she at last came out with the name of Nongpok Kainou Chingsompa the very person for whom she is suffering. With no further delay, he was sent for and the lovers at last were united. Given the opportunity, she soon followed Nongpok Ningthou and thus love fulfilled, the two lived happily ever after.

(f) The region of Moirang picturesque set in the south-western part of Manipur is the birth place of many a lover, of whom the story of Khamba-Thoibi, divinely ordained, stands out most conspicuously The hero is the paragon of great manly strength and the other of feminine beauty. After a long course of unusual travails, the two are at last united, but destined to have only a short life. As it is mostly presented by ballad-singers with the accompanying instrument *Pena,* the story is still kept alive with the resonance of the diction, strong characterisation, description of nature and use of striking similes.

CHRONICLES

The ancient kings of Manipur caused to write a number of chronicles, some of them obviously to perpetuate not only their names and achievements but their families as well. The works are locally known Ningthourol. While the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* is couched mainly in prose, the *Ningthourol Lambuba,* the *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba,* and the *Chada Laihui* are in poetry. The *Ningthourol Lambuba* marks a distinct character in form and content from the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and is exclusively the account of the Meitei kings who performed coronation ceremonies. The work is conspicuous by the absence of dates of important events, references to the neighbouring countries and migration to this place, and concentrates on recounting the individual achievements of the Meitei kings and their glorification.

The *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* as the title implies is the account of Moirang kings and though cast in the likeness of the *Ningthourol Lambuba.*, the language is comparatively simple and more musical. The introductory consisting of the invocation, graphic description of the region along with its historical background is, indeed, a fine effusion of choice words. Reminding one of the inspired portrayal of Panthoipi, the Meitei princess with her protean variety, the writer here also is carried away and the words rush forth like the waters of a hill-stream. But the heroic tenor is no less evident than that of the previous work.

The *Khuman Kangleiron* is a chronicle of the Khuman clan which held its sway in the south of the valley adjacent to the Meitei territory but composed late in the 18th century. It is not furnished with chronology of the events nor is it concerned to flaunt martial achievements of the respective kings. It rather parades the names of successive kings with lively anecdotes of how such titles were derived and other contemporary events. The composition is, by and large, poetic but is obviously devoid of the flourish one comes across in the *Ningthourol Lambuba* and the *Chada Laihui*

The *Chada Laihui* is a genealogy of the Meitei kings from the distaff side and is perhaps unique of its kind in any literature. Apart from its historical aspect, the merit of the work lies in its poetic beauty, particularly in describing the dramatic events leading to place names though prolix in style and uniformly archaic in diction.

The *Angom Laihui*, a chronicle of the kings of Angom clan, is cast in the pattern of *Ningthourol Lambuba, Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba.* It also recounts the achievements of the Angom kings and how they are named with the indication of the name of the respective king's mother at the end of each king's account.

The *Leithak Leikahron* meaning an account of the heaven and the earth is a treatise on Meitei cosmogony. For the first time it establishes a universal Lord against the innumerable local deities. Though the work falls short of being literary, the story can't but be regarded as the corner-stone of the future Meitei faith.

The *Sakok Lamlen* may be taken as the *Upanishad* of the Meitei indigenous faith and is a sequel to the myth expounded in the previous work. As the earlier it is certainly contemporaneous with King Khagemba (1526 - 56) and is clearly an exposition of the three royal preceptors who attempted to satisfy the curiosity of the king about the knowledge to acquire for one's salvation and also the different kinds of visible and non-visible gods.

The *Nongsaba Laihui* is a song to Nongsaba who is taken to be the second son of the Universal Lord. Unlike the previous works, the narrative is in poetry and the diction, devoid of intense archaism, presents a pleasant reading

OTHER NOTABLE WORKS

There are some more works standing out distinct on their own individual merits but having no proper place to be accomodated in any of the foregoing major trends.

Poireiton Khunthok is a rare work for the theme of a long journey along the hills and valley of Manipur by Poireiton and his wife Leinaotabi in search of people who do not suffer from illness or physical disability as also for its diction apart from the prevalent practice of composition. It is the first work in prose in old Manipuri literature. The occasional resorting to catechelical style enlivens the otherwise drab prose and one does not come across in future texts a great part of the vocabulary which is usually archaic.

Salkao, literally meaning a male ox, is also a rare work of its kind in that it curiously records the fight between well-grown bulls belonging to respectable personages but gone bush and no one can be sure whether a single hand or more as in the case of the *Chainarol* would be engaged in its composition. The text consisting of the accounts of seven fights of fiercesome bulls, however, does not deal so much in detail as to delineate the background of the fights with the glorification of the fighting field in respect of its history and anecdotal references.

The diction cannot be said to be entirely poetic, but with comparatively short sentences its flow is untrammelled.

Leiron meaning an account of flowers bears testimony to the love of nature and appreciation of its beauty by the ancient people and it is the first work having the name of the writer that is, King Charairongba, the Meitei king who had a glorious reign over ten tributary kings and the poet does begins:

> Come spring and the first rumble of
> the approaching monsoon has been heard
> in the distance . . . and it is the time
> of the year when Poireiton accompanied
> by Leinaotabi made his journey to earth.

There are, in all, descriptions of one hundred flowers and orchids The diction is to a great degree, archaic and most of the references are diffiult to trace. However one cannot fail to appreciate the swift rhythmic flow and the pleasant musical cadences of the lines.

Yenlon attempts to clearly show that beauty is not the exclusive virtue of orchids and other flowers, but many other plants, particularly herbs growing in the wild have their own too. These, an ancient bard did spot and inspired him to compose pleasant lines on them. In all, those are such sixty-six herbs given in the text. The diction with less archaism but utterly chaste and with shorter sentences, sets a fine example of narrative quality.

Tharon an account of the lunar months of a year is not so much related to astronomical reading as to a poetic presentation of the natural phenomena or other incidents associated with each of the months. The diction though archaic and prolix is savoury for its melic appeal. The references are sometimes abstruse and difficult to make out.

Nongmaijing Chiggoiba (Account of the Nongmaijing Hills) and *Langgol Chinggoiba* (Account of the Langgol Hills) are comparatively short works. The Nongmaijing is an imposing hill in the east of Imphal Town with its sprawling branches from the north to the south. And the second describes the extensive hills situated in the north of the Imphal town with their lofty heights and steady stature. Purposely composed for recitation, there is a trotting rhythm of the lines and the former is more archaic than that of the latter.

All these works summarily placed may be said to constitute the early Manipuri literature before the advent of Hinduism which naturally brings in its train the influence of Indo-Aryan literature.

Sandhān, Vol. X, No. 2, July–December 2010

Aribam Kumar Sharma

Contemporary Manipuri Literature

INTRODUCTION

No one in Manipur can forget the year 1891 A.D. This is a year so crucial in the history of Manipur. It was in August 1891 that the British conquered Manipur and brought it under their rule, as a result of which the once princely state (sovereign) became a British protectorate. Manipur could see prosperity because of certain changes in the political, social, educational and cultural aspects. This change was brought by the western civilization.

The spread of western education paved the way for moulding the ideas and shaping the outlook of the people of Manipur. The establishment of Johnstone School in 1873 was a landmark in the field of education in Manipur. Really it was a milestone in the history of Manipur. A group of seven pioneering poets of Modern Manipuri literatures, popularly called "Saptarshi Mandal" (Galaxy of Seven Rishis), was formed in the early decades of the 20th century. The Mandal consists of (1) Hijam Anganghal (1892-1943), (2) Khwairakpam Chaoba (1896-1950) (3) Hijam Irabot (1897-1951), Hawaibam Nabadwipchandra (1897-1946) Dr. Lamabam Kamal (1900-1934), Ashangbam Minaketan Singh (1906-1995) and Arambam Darendrajit Singh (1907-1944). Manipuri Lilterature, in the hands of these poets took a new turn. It was in one sense, a rediscovery of the past glory of Manipuri culture and literature. A renaissance was born in Manipuri literature, thanks to the adoption of Bengali culture and literature along with the western literature. The major stars of the constellation of poets during this period were Angahal, Chaoba and Kamal, the triumvirate of the renaissance.

They did not lag behind other leaders in the spirit of patriotism, social consciousness and the sense of socio-cultural reawakening. The literary traditions of Mother India were handed down in the hands of the trio.

The three great poets as mentioned above were really the master craftsmen of modern Manipuri literature. Angahal will ever be remembered in the world of Manipuri literature for his masterpiece- ***'Khamba Thoibi Sheireng'*** a literary epic of some 34 thousand lines. Kamal too will shine for ever in the hearts of Manipuri readers for his novel- ***'Madhabi'*** published in 1930. It was with this romantic novel that Kamal, took the Manipuri literary world by storm. ***'Madhabi'*** was the first Manipuri novel which could capture the hearts of thousands of Manipuri readers, young and old ***'Leipareng (Garland),*** his only book of poetry is a landmark in the history of Manipuri poetry. Chaoba also figured in the list of the pioneers of modern Manipuri literature. His novel- ***'Labangalata'*** is the first historical novel in Manipuri literature. Angahal, with his novel 'Jahera' the third of its kind in Manipuri literature has become immortal for the simple reason that it bears an indelible stamp of a new facet of love- 'Love in heart and not in head'.

The contribution of Chaoba, as a pioneering poet is noteworthy. He sang the glory of his land, his people and his language. He expresses his joy and pride in the rich cultural heritage of Manipur Kamal's poems are based on humanism,' patriotism, universal love and love of nature. He is the worshipper of beauty. The tenderness in his poems speaks of his sublime heart. These are the hallmarks of his works. Prof. L.D. Singh, the noted critic remarks - "He (Kamal) articulated a yearning for freedom from the narrow confines of largely feudalistic Manipuri society and the striving for a better world based on universal love and self-sacrifice." Embracing both Kamal and Chaoba, he further says- "Chaoba's anguish, Kamal's questioning attitude, humanism and universality were central experiences that showed their identity with deep involvement and searching interest in the affairs and destiny of their people."As regards Angahal's poetry he remarks- "Angahal's poetry was pregnant with a pulsation of rythm unfolding a vista of rustic life." Thus began the movement of Manipuri Literature in the early part of 20th century with the seed of renaissance being sown in the soil of Manipuri literature.

CONTEMPORARY MANIPURI LITERATURE

Coming to the point of contamporariness in Manipuri literature, we have to define first, what contemporary literature is. According to Concise Oxford Dictionary, the connotation of the term 'contemporary' may be summed up as ' a person or thing existing in the same time as another.' It also connotes a living, occuring or originating at the same time. By contemporary Manipuri literature we mean the Manipuri literature brought out or published during the common or the same period. Chaoba-Kamal's period of Manipuri literature may even be taken as our contemporary. However, many Manipuri scholars are of the opinion that contemporary Manipuri literature begins with the literary trends of Post Independence era.

In the light of the background given above, it would be appropriate to cover the period of the contemporary Manipuri literature right from the post Chaoba-Kamal poets.

POETRY

First, let us dwell on the comtemporary Manipuri poetry. It is needless to mention that Chaoba, Kamal and Angahal were the pioneer Manipuri poets and it was in their hands that the modern Manipuri poetry could form its own shape. The changes in the feelings and sensibilities of these poets who faced directly the social, historical, political and economic forces of the time led to the birth of modernism in Manipuri poetry. Most of the writers of the early period who planted the saplings of modern Manipuri literature were born during or just in the wake of the second World War. The war destroyed the foundation of human society.The writers could not check their sensibilities and their felt experiences are nurtured by the contemporary situation in which they live. It is quite natural that a poet draws the pictures of the prevailing conditions of the society in a poetic way. A writer can never live aloof from the society in which he lives. A writer's response to contemporary social milieus is a must and a literature without the contemporary sense and sensibilities is of no value. In the words of Alexander Sozhenitsyh, literature that is not the breath of contemporary society that dares not transmit the pains and fears of that society that does not warn in time against threatening moral and social dangers-such literature does not deserve the name of literature; it is only a facade."

As has been said earlier, the monumental figures of Angahal, Kamal and Chaoba etc. cannot be ignored when we talk of contemporary Manipuri poetry. However, if we look into the reality and rationality of the feelings of the poets of post Independence era, our ultimate choice vests with poets like Irawat, Nilakanta and Samarendra. Irawat's *'Karkhana'* Nilakanta's *'Manipury'* and Samarendra's *'Huranba Macha'* play a great role in the making of modernism in Manipuri poetry. Complimenting on the role of Irawat, Dr.M. Priyobrata, a young critic of Manipuri literature writes — "Veering around the bread and butter issues, Irawat's response to contemporary situation is so huge that poetry happens to be his revolutionary note, the prophetic note that spurs the toiling masses on to a vision of light and emancipation" Let us once test the music in the songs of Irawat: —

Soot-stained are thin fates
Starvation makes their voice fallen
Brown are their lives
Among the lives of multitudes
A life as white as snow
Emerges in the image of old age.
– Karkhana (workshop)

Nilakanta's depiction of political as well as social condition of Manipur in his poem *'Manipur'* (1949) awakens the people of Manipur. To a serious thinker like Nilakanta, the emergence of independence was a false dawn. He was really aware of the general degradation in Manipuri society. He knew well the gap between promise and reality. False promise disheartened him. He experienced political instability, economic dependence, social nepotism and corruption. His deep consciousness of the growing alienation is seen in the poem- *'Manipur'* as follows:—

Whither the path
No unity between-precept and practice
No nexus between path and destiny
Personality more valued than ideal?
Thou art, questioning, o Mother Manipur.
–(Tr.L.D. Singh)

Inspite of the fact that it was a time when Manipur was surrounded by gloom and despair, Nilakanta had a yearning for light and integrity. His aspiration for something afar is expressed in the poem- ***'Chatlasine kadaidano Ibani'*** (Let us go then, you and I), some of the line are as follows :

Let us go then you and I
In the moon-lit expanse where the sailors cannot reach
To the realm unseen and unheard of
Only let us go and do not ask
'Why is this?' (Tr. L.D. Singh)

Nilakanta depicts the whirlwind of contemporary political crisis in his poem- 'Manipur 1973 as follows:

Sixty MLA's MLA's
Do you have the guts
To build up a new Manipur
With your slogan of Jai Manipur
What has happened now
President rule has been reimposed
Mother, thy face never changes
In the last twenty four years
The heart of the children never changes
The nasty loathing and dirty game of politics
Deceiving the mother
What can be the help now
Election will come again
Votes will be cast again
The Legislative assembly will be reformed
And it will again collapse
The ten lakh children shall weep
The alien onlookers shall laugh with broad grins
What can be the help now?

Next to Nilakanta, Laishram Samarendra portays the picture of the contemporary Manipuri society. His poetry is full of humour and he is famous for his wit and wisdom. Majority of his lines are satirical and they go hand in hand with religious beliefs. One can agree with Prof. L.D. Singh when he says that Somorendra is the real herald of modernity in Manipuri poetry. His later works like '***Wa Amata Haige***

Telenga' (A word, O kite) and ***'Mamang Leikai Thambal Satle'*** (Blooms forth the virgin form (1974) show the loss of humanism, corruption and hypocrisy in Manipuri Poetry. A beautiful imagery in the poem- ***'Huranba Macha'*** (The Petty thief) will show how Samarendra was successful in portraying the helplessness of a petty thief. The line runs as:

One petty thief
Was caught by six thieves
The petty thief lost his life
When trampled by thirtysix thieves
And torn to pieces by forty thieves

Suggestiveness is the quality of his poems . We can cite an example from his poem-

'ChingKashiNgasidi' (Let as climb the hills to day) The Meiteis (Manipuri) have the custom of testing the choicest wearing the best and climbing high hills on the New Year Day. It symbolises the progress towards a higher and better life. Poet Samarendra ridicules this belief and writes:—

Is the land so beautiful
Is the valley so charming
Is Khwairamband so clear
Are the Manipuris so united
O, all Manipuris unite atleast today
So that you may remain united forever.

Samarendra's poetry is followed by some young poets of the second generation. The list includes Shri Biren, RK. Madhubir, Thangjam Ibopishak and Yumlembam Ibomcha. The contemporary Manipuri Poetry could reach its full flowering stage in the hands of these poets. Dr. Moirangthem Priyobrata, the Manipuri critic says "As a reaction against romanticism and emotional exuberance, their poetry find eloquence on doubts and scepticism in new rhythm and diction. To be very precise and particular, their pens delve deep into every detail of the dirt and squalor of Imphal city and the nasty psyche of modern men" These younger poets feel that they are living in a period of crisis Prof. L.D. Singh is also of the opinion that their poetry reflects largely the malaise of the times- the generalised anxiety, a sense of futility, rootlessness and helplessness. Really these poets aim at revolting against convention and beliefs both in life and arts.

Shri Biren the most potential poet in theme and spirit of this group compares Manipur with a dreamland. He says that every one

Has to pretend blind while seeing

Has to pretend seeing while blind
Each has to feign hearing while deaf
Each has to feign deaf while hearing
–(Dream Village)

Shri Biren's deep love for the downtrodden humanity is expressed in the following lines quoted from ***'Dabi'*** (demand):—

My demand is that
Kama also should live
Give him freedom
Give him freedom
Give him freedom.

How beautifully and also simply he expresses his search for identity in the following lines:—

Give me a place to live
Give me a place to live
Give me a place
To live forever
A place.

By now, he has changed a lot and his thinking has been directed towards mysticism and spiritualism. Yumlembam Ibomcha and Thangjam Ibopishak who were once considered as 'young angry poets' have also changed in their outlook in poetry as well as their expresion of thoughts. The degree of their protest and revolt has come down. Let us try to feel what Ibomcha wrote in his earlier poems. In the poem- ***'Hayengmuk Mapokki'*** (the Next birth) the poet writes:—

In the next birth
The moment I come out of my mother's body

I shall stamp my feet heavily on her chest
And fly out winged
Without taking even a drop of her breast milk
Wingout through the narrow door of my house
I shall grow up like a street dog
Alone loitering whichever way I like
Fed by none
Existing alone.

In assessing the standard of Ibomcha's poetry. Prof. L.D. Singh has rightly remarked-

"In the rich polyphony of comtemporary poetry of the country, Y. Ibomcha's poetic works, as his short stories do, are best known for their surrealistic inner journey with imagist poetic tension." As for Thangjam Ibopishak's poetry, the elder critic comments that the poet 'provides the example of the self annihilation of the Moderns.' Ibopishak has lost his belief in humanity. The social reality of Manipur has compelled him to do so. In the poem, *Bhoot amasung Maikhum* (The ghost and the mask), the poet shows the restlessness of his soul at the conflict between man's aspiration and the forces against it. He writes:

I know not since when
A ghost was beside me
Morning afternoon night
He followed me always
Like my shadow,
. . . . .
. . . . .
He suddenly clasped me
And gripped my throat
. . . . .
My breadth stopped Eyes blurred
Much saddened I queried him
'What's my fault?'
He only looked at me sternly
But did'nt reply,
'Man, you must commit misdeeds, speak falsehood
Do wrongs, think of destruction

I shouted in tangled, fragments,
He began to loosen his grip.
His hold loosened more
My breathing became easier.
'If only I exist let others go to the dogs
If hundreds die arid I alone live
It will be my religion
Good for humanity
Only at these, he completely loosened me
Smiled at me with a side glance
As if nothing happened."

Next to Ibopishak, Rajkumar Madhubir Singh has attained fame by exposing the hollowness of man. His concept for 'man cheaper than straw' is really acclaimed by many critics. His expression for degradation & meaning- lessness of human life is also seen in almost of his poems. Smt. Bhanumati's poems are also accountable.

There is a third generation of poets in the contemporary Manipuri literature. Birendrajit Naorem, Dr. Lanchenba Meetei, Dr. Arambam Memchoubi, Borkeina, Saratchand Thiyam, Bhubonsana Rajkumar are the prominent poets of this generation. The advent of 21st century gave rise to the immensity of contemporary problems of Manipur. The state has become a land where money matters most. Everywhere corruption is raising its head high. In the words of Dr. Priyobrata, "The state no doubt turns to be a neverland, where nothing is possible and, at the same time, everything is possible." Birendrajit Naorem has so sarcastically expressed his idea about the reality of Manipuri society in the following lines:

To day
I haven't taken with me
Any gun to shoot at my brother's breast
Nor have I any bomb
To be hurled on mother's lap
How unpatriotic I am to day.
–(Today)

Bhubonsana Rajkumar's expression of hopes and aspirations amidst hard realities is also noteworthy. In his poem ***'Mangda'*** (In Dream), he writes:

A dream suddenly crumbles
old homes and structures
. . . . .
In dream
out of the debris crumbled
Sprout again
New unknown dreams of renewal
Accompanied with unpercieved hopes
Soaring into new heights
Phoenix- like
out of broken ones.
Clouds of other dreams
Gather
In the sky of hopes
Hopes fall in torrents
Floods of renewals
Inundate
In dream.

Bhubonsana has a mix-feeling. Sometimes he shows his fear psychosis which is imprinted in his mind by the reality of the contemporary Manipuri society. In his poem ***'Marup'*** (Friend), he writes:

Friends,
A gunshot is heard
Who must have taken rest
When shall our turn arrive
Must we approach the
Morgue Volutarily?

Dr. Arambam Memchoubi is one of the most popular feminist poets of Manipur. She is always in search and research of the roots, the identity, myth and the legends of the Manipuris. In her poems we find the spirit of patriotism, feminism , revolution and liberation. She has a firm belief in humanity and its moral values. Her poem ***'Nongthang Leima'*** (Lighning Goddess) is a symbol of her poetic articulation in which she uses myths as a tool. Prof. Damudar has righly commented that "Memchoubi is initially a rebel poet with passionate determination to destroy all encumbrances. Her poems are replete with passion and defiance in mythical symbols and archtypal images of yore." Indeed, Memchoubi is a female poet of high order.

Birendrajit Naorem, another young poet does not fail to express his hope and aspiration for his motherland. He loves freedom. He yearns for it. He has love for justice, faith and truth. He always longs for human values. To attain this he will never lose heart He will always use his pen for the welfare of mankind. His poem —***'Langthengnariba Lanmi'*** (The fighting soldier) shows his concern for freedom and justice. The relentless struggle of a fighing soldier for the good cause of motherland as seen in this poem gives a powerful message to the patriots of Mother Manipur. How sweet his voice is when he says:

I am Karna
Fighting inexhaustively
May be the battle is Kurukshetra
For self and human destiny
One day shall I die for sure
Fighting in the battle
How can one say dying in the encounter
Is a defeat
Ability to die is victory
I shall go in fighting Relentlessly
In the Kurukshetra for self and my destiny.

Saratchand Thiyam, a young poet of unique personality has his own poetic consciousness of the contemporary Manipuri society. In his poem, ***'Shibagi Nungaiba'*** (The bliss of Death), he expresses his feelings like this:

Why should I now dead for so long
Feel the desire to live again
Is it because of the living things
In the world around me
That I start thinking alone in my heart
Taking myself for someone worth alive
–(Tr. B.S. Rajkumar)

Dilip Mayengbam is also one of the young poets of Saratchand's age. He is also famous for his suggestiveness in theme as well as expression. He never believes in direct description. The following few lines will speak of his style.

> O children in the womb of the poor mother
> Ready to pulsate in life
> Don't venture out yet
> I like you not to risk the journey
> For, you have no inn to live.
> –("Letter to the unborn children")

Salam Tomba, a poet of Dilip's age has also his own feelings about the atrocities in the Manipuri social life. His poem—'A poem still born' is a beautiful example of his honest concern of social awareness. He writes:

> I do write always
> The verse for a mother
> Whose fears were shed to the last drop
> For the bride becoming a widow
> Before the withering of kundo garland
> For the woman gang raped
> In front of her own child
> For the wife being molested
> Before the eyes of her own husband
> Oh a gunshot was heard
> A poem was born.

A host of new poets in the track of Saratchand has ventured into new domains of literary isms. Mention may be made of Ibemhal, Kunjarani, Shantibala, Imojeet Ningombam, Vidyasagar Naorem etc. These young poets have brought some changes in the contemporary Manipuri poetry and it may be presumed that these changes will be for the betterment of Manipuri literature.

FICTION: NOVEL

It is needless to say that the indispensable conditions of the time give birth to the different art forms. The contemporary Manipuri society has witnessed many changes- economic, political, social and cultural.

These changes sometimes happen to be not for the better but for the worst. The Manipuris are gripped with violence, tension and uncertainty. People are living in chaos and they are facing the abuse of black laws like the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958. Fake encounters, extrajudicial killings, rapes and violation of human Rights etc have become the talk of the town. Our writers cannot escape from such issues. They are conscious of such a period of crisis and they paint it in their writings. Manipuri fiction draws pictures of such a complex situation of contemporary Manipuri society. Hijam Guno is highly conscious of the unity of the people in the hills and the valley against the background of insurgency. His novel, ***'Ipam Meihoure'*** could throw some light on this issue. Aribam Chitreshwar Sharma could deal with the hard life of the poor people in the rural areas who are subjugated to the exploitation of the high class people. Tharosangbi, the central character of the novel of the same title draws the sympathy of the readers. Women's liberation is the key point in the theme of ***'Borsaheb ongbi Sanatombi'*** written by MK. Binodini. Pacha Meitei depicted the complexity and degradation of Imphal city in his novel ***'Imphal amasung Masigi Ishing Nungsitki Phibam.'*** The revelation of the modern existence in a crowded city is unique. Many well made novels depicting the contemporary social conditions of Manipur are coming in the picture. The theme of these novels is very much realistic and the messages are clear. B.M. Maisnamba's appearance in the scene of modern Manipuri Fiction is a milestone. His novels are full of new ideas, new techniques and new dimension. The element of fantasy is playing a great role in his novels, like ***'Ima Nurabi'*** and ***'Ningthemnubi Pon-gi Chekla.'*** It is a voyage in search of the lost island and the forgotten history. All his novels are focussed on the lives of forgotten women. It is a credit for the novelist Maisnamba that his women characters have become the symbol of women-emancipation and Gender-justice. Another novelist-Kshetri Bira is very much in the picture nowadays. His novels are much discussed and widely read. His art of telling stories is so great that every account in his novels seems very much realistic and one cannot but feel that there is a magic in his writing. Young novelist like Borkeinya, Nee Devi, Mutum Devala etc. have also written some innovative novels. They are sucessful in capturing the moods and pulse of the masses. They can win the heart of the reading community also. These writers belong to a new generation. Their outlook on human life bears a radical departure from the old beaten track of the traditional novelists.

SHORT STORY

The Modern Manipuri short story owes its importance to the publication of a literary journal entitled—*'Meirịk'* in 1974. A group of short story writers like Nongthombam Kunjamohon, Khumanthem Prakash, Elangbam Dinamani, Nongthombam Biren (Shri Biren), Lamabam Viramani, Keisham Priyokumar, Yumlembam Ibomcha, Nilbir Shastri etc. appeared on the scene. They set a new trend and started experimentation in short story as a means of revealing contemporary reality. The lives of downtrodden and the exploited ones are reflected in their works. The fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of these lowgrade people is forecast as optimistic. Prof. L. Damudar has rightly said- "Priyokumar reflects the victims of ethnic rivalry in apt construct of dreams and hard reality, fears and hope' in his much acclaimed short story entitled- *'Nongdi Tarakkhidare'*." With the advent of 21 st century a movement of rediscovery of root, identity and nativity amongst the Meiteis (Manipuris) began keeping aside the spirit and the values of the old days. The new generation of writers presented their stories with new conception and modern approach.

The Manipuri short story of the later age, though short in size and composition is intense and artistic. The writers were really successful in conveying the hopes and aspirations of the people of the contemporary Manipuri society. The elder writers like Binodini, Kunjamohon, Sonamani, Dinamani, Prakash etc. could also dwell on different problems of contemporary Manipuri society with a medium degree of success. But it is to be said that their stories lack in intensity and directness of the purpose. However the young writers like Priyokumar, Sudhir Naoroibam, Nee Devi, Sunita Ningombam, Binapani and many others could successfully project the woman emancipation, the question of territorial integrity, the horror of fake encounter, the ills of power politics, the army atrocities, ethnic clashes etc. which are going on in Manipur as a day's routine. The future of Manipuri short story is bright. In the opinion of the critic

Priyobrata, " Manipuri short story is a green shoot on the tree of Manipuri Literature. It has become an effective medium of restoring our society to its position of prominence by replacing, or somtimes destroying, the absolute and suicidal tendencies in itself, in that it ever maps and remaps the vivid anxiety, for a traditon of resistance, still struggling hard for a conflict- free and democratic world order."

DRAMA

The contemporary Manipuri Drama was facing a sense of spiritual crisis and it aims at a vision for a new life. Manipuri Proscenium theatre has already crossed 100 years of its existence. G.C. Tongbra who is regarded as the colossus of Manipuri drama & theatre was the first person to respond to the contemporary problems of Manipuri society. He used drama as a tool for social changes. To him it is just like a washing soap for cleansing the dirt or evils of Manipuri soceity. His plays were satirical and full of humour and wit. He was a rebel in the sense that he encountered various social forces which stood against human lot. His ***'Tapta' 'Ngabongkhao', 'Chengni Khunjai'*** are all successful plays with definite messages of social reform. The social & political conditions of the contemporary Manipur are reflected in his plays. Next to Tongbra, Arambam Samarendra is considered to be a great dramatist. His reflection on the degradation of the Manipuri middle class is projected in almost of his plays. ***'Judge Sahebki Imung'*** (The Family of Judge Saheb) is one of such plays. He was always in search of identity. He wanted to preserve and promote native culture. His love for freedom was known to everybody. He was a sensitive writer. He fought for women-emancipation. He stood for Manipur and died for Manipur. Shri Biren is also one of the distinguished dramatists who laid foundation for a new type of play projecting the hopes and aspirations of the human life of contemporary Manipuri society. His plays are based on existentialism. 'Hallakpa (Return) is an experimental play. H. Kanhailal (1941) a distinguished theatre Director is also a great playwright ***'Tamnalai', 'Kabui Keioiba'*** are all his classic plays. He deals with the human fate. He shows in his dramas the subjugation of the weaker section by the stronger section and the ultimate suffering of the annihilated ones.

Pukhramba Shamu (1942) who also belongs to the school of expressionist theatre manifested the life of the inner truth. Athokpam Tomchou (1944) is also one of the famous Manipuri playwrights who shows the degradation of human values. His play ***'Bus-stop'*** is widely read and reviewed. Some other playwrights like W. Kamini, Kh. Brajachand, B.K Wahengba, Yumnam Rajendra, Kshetri Sanajaoba, etc. have their own contributions in the development of contemporary Manipuri Drama. Brajchand shows, in his drama—***'Shri Tomba amasung Kei'*** ("Shri Tomba and The Tiger), that a human being can sell his body at a price to a tiger which can eat his flesh if he is unable to repay the amount he borrowed, within a stipulated time. In short, the future of Manipuri drama is bright. In the hands of internationally renowned Directors like Ratan Thiyam and Kanhailal, the Manipuri Drama is safe and sound.

CONCLUSION

Since the present-day Manipur is synonymous with militancy and the excesses of military action, writers from this tiny state will find it difficult to remain silent, because they are witness to so many horrifying incidents which have become the talk of the town. The chaos that has erupted in this state is sure to be reflected in the literature of this land. However, against all odds, some of our writers are still optimistic and they believe in the suvival of human life. In short, the Contemporary Manipuri Literature will take its own course following the changing trends of contemporary Manipuri society as it is said that literature is the mirror of the society.

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Manipuri Language: A Linguistic Study

INTRODUCTION

Manipuri is the official language of the state of Manipur. It is the lingua-franca for all groups of people. It has been included in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution since 20th August 1992. Deliberations of the Manipur state Darbar (the highest Executive, Legislative and Judicial Body) were conducted in Manipuri: even the resolution of the Darbar was recorded in Manipuri in the past during the rule of the Maharajas. The state Government issued orders, notices and proclamations in this language in the past. Manipuri literature is rich, it has old literature in various genre, namely, poetry, prose, astronomy, herbal medicine, cosmology, ritual, myth and oral literature,. Modern Manipuri literature has rich contributions in the fields of poetry, drama, novel, short story, essay, travelogue etc.

AFFILIATION

Manipuri, a language of Tibeto-Burman (TB) sub-family, is locally known as *Meeteilon* (the Meetei + Lon 'language'). It is basically spoken in the state of Manipur; it is the state official language, the mother tongue of about 15.5 lakhs and is spoken and understood by other communities of about 7.4 lakhs in the state according to 2001 census. There are native speakers also in the neighboring North-eastern states of India, in Assam mainly, Tripura, West Bengal (particularly in Brindavan, Radha Kunda). In Assam 3% of the total population speaks Manipuri; in Myanmar 1.5 lakhs speak Manipuri while 0.5 lakhs is Manipuri in Bangladesh according to 1961 Census as reported by Manipuri Sahitiya Parishad Imphal. The state has officially recognized 32 Scheduled tribes speaking various mother tongues whose second language is Manipuri: they use it for their inter-group communication.

Matisoff (1991) categorized Manipuri in the geographically determined group Kamarupan which traditionally covers for Kuki-Chin-Naga, Abor-Miri-Dafla and Bodo-Garo. In the earlier classifications Manipuri is put in Kuki-Chin (Grierson 1903-1928) or Kuki-Chin-Naga sub-group (Vogelin and Vogelin 1965:17). However, it has generally been recognized that the Mikir, Mru and Manipuri Languages do not fit readily in this or other sub-groups of the area. Benedict (1972) puts it in a separate branch, closer to Kuki-Naga branch. Shafer (1974) recognizes it as a separate branch under the Kukish section of Burmic division. Bradely (1994) placed Manipuri in Kuki-Chin with somewhat different from other members of Kuki-Chin Languages. The latest opinion regarding its affiliation is Robins Burling (2003). In Burling's word 'None of the earlier classifications include Meetei within one particular group of 'Naga' or Kuki languages though it has often been taken to be a member of the larger Naga-Kuki grouping. As with Karbi it seems safest to leave Meetei by itself (Burling, 2003 P.187-188).

DIALECTS

Manipuri language has a few dialects. They spread in all directions: Sekmai dialect spoken in Sekmai village, 19 kms in the north of Imphal; Andro (dialect) village 27 kms in the east of Imphal; Phayeng (dialect) village 14 kms in the west of Imphal; Kakching (dialect) village 45 kms in the west of Imphal, Khurkhul (dialect) village 14 kms in the north-west of Imphal. There is another Manipuri dialect spoken in Kwatha, a village situated in the Indo-Myanmar border near Moreh. The distinctive points of differences between Imphal standard and its dialects are: the dialect has only voiceless stop consonants **p, t, j** and **ch** while standard uses its counterpart voiced consonant- **b, d, g** and **j** also according to phonological condition; standard has no intonation while dialects have intonation and some lexical variations are also found. e.g **phamung** 'bed' in Imphal (standard form) while **phanung** in other dialects, namely, Andro, Koutruk, Kakching, Sekmai; **mingsel** 'mirror' in Imphal while **nungsel** in this dialects; **KOK tumba** 'to wash hair' in Imphal while **KOK cotpa** in others etc. Besides, these Manipuri has loan words while dialects have not used many loan words.

SCRIPT AND SPELLING

Manipuri is written in two orthographic forms - Bengali as well as its own script, known as Meetei Mayek (script). In regard to its origin, it has three opinions: its own creation according to the local scholar, the second opinion is of T. C. Hodson tracing its introduction by the Chinese migrants in 1500 A.D. This is rejected because Meetie Mayek and Chinese system of writing are distinctly different. But in the opinions of Brown, Dun and Damant it is a modification of the Deva Nagari (1873:94). The accepted date for the earliest use of Meetei Mayek is between the 11th and 12th centuries (Ch. Manihar Singh 1984:23). In the classification of scripts provided by K.S. Singh and Manoharan (1993: 26-29) Meetei Mayek is part of the Tibetan group of scripts, which originated from the Gupta Brahmi script. The original Brahmi script was modified to accommodate the phonemic distioctions of Meetei Mayek. The Meetei Mayek 27 is recognized by the state Govt., and started introducing in the school, standard III since 2006.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The present development of Manipuri language and literature passes through the oral literary tradition and three important historical events. There are two important oral traditions, namely, **Pena Sakpa** (story-teller with a traditional string), **Khongjom Parba** (narrating the event of the 1891 Angol-Manipur War of Independence with a dhol i.e. the battle of Khongjom) **Khulang Isei** (folk songs) and **Phunga wari** (folk tales). From the traditional oral literature, **Pena Sakpa,** the romantic legend of Manipur, the great love-story of Khamba and Princess Thoibi, began to be treated in old Meetei ballads from the later part of the 13th century. This romantic ballad was later treated into the great romantic epic of 34,000 lines by a modern Meetei poet, the late Hijam Anganghal Singh, in 1940. Besides these, there is also the art of **Story-teller**, narrating story or events of the past i.e. of the king, genelogical history, genesis, Mahabharata, Ramayana etc. to the people. This is an art: this is a profession.

In the development, Manipuri passes through three stages. The first stage is the process of state formation, ethnic groups and lineages namely, Angom, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Thanga Kambong Mangang (Ningthoucha), Khaba, Sarangthem, Leisangthem, Chenglei, Haorok Konthou, Manting-Mara, Lela Khongnang, Chakpas, Heirem Khunjan, Moirang, Thanga Kambong, Seloy Langmai etc. are in the valley. These groups were merged into Meetei during the process of state formation as seen from semantic reduplication; productively and literarily are used in this language.

uchek-sawa 'bird'
Moirang clain
Meetei (Ningthouja)
(Moirang Kangleiro, P.9) (see Yashawanta 1995)

The use of old archaic lexical form continues before the coming of Hinduism. In this period the sentences are generally long, a clear-cut punctuation is not used, the sentences generally end by –se/–te, the name of the writers is not written.

The second phase has the influence from the contact with Indo-Aryan. This started in the last part of the 16th century and the explosion is vividly seen in the 18th century. Loan words related to ritual and religions are in the beginning. During the reign of Garibniwaj (1709-1848) a large number of books were written. In this period many writers got acquainted with Indo-Aryan languages, particularly Sanskrit and Bengali; the influence of these two great literatures is very grave in Manipur. Loan words are numerous but grammatical influence is not significant. The period extends up to 1891. The traditional style is of long sentences, circumlocution, with the accretion of adjective and adverbial phrases, with a noun closely followed by a pronoun for the sake of emphasis or musical effect with much semantic reduplication. The translation works are great, from Sanskrit, from Hindi, from Bengali etc. From Sanskrit Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kalidas's Shakuntala etc. were translated; from

Bengali Bankimchandra's novels, Sharatchandra's novels, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's, Meghanadvadh Kavya etc. for instance, were translated. From Hindi, Premchand's novels and short stories, Jainendra's novels, Bhagawati Charan's novels were also available in Manipuri.

The third phase is the rise of Modern Manipuri starting from 1891 the Anglo-Manipur War of Independence. Then gradually formal education has started. Upto 1960 many educated people used many loan words of Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali. Just opposite to this from 1980s people started using many vocabulary of English words in the speech. Even in 1990s the very common lat line in any invitation is **patra-na nimantran katcha-ba-gi aparadh ngak-pi-ga-ni** 'you would excuse me/use for using 'paper' in your invitation. In this sentence of five words two words say, **'Katchabag'** for invitation **ngakpigani** 'will excuse' while the other remaining three words are Sanskrit In this way Modern Manipuri grows up through these three phases (see Yashawanta 2002).

PHONOLOGY

The initial occurrence of velar nasal ng is a distinctive phonological feature of Tibeto-Burman (TB) sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan family. This feature is not found in Indo-Aryan sub-family (in the languages of Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit, etc.) even in English and Dravidian languages (Tamil, Kanada, Malayalam etc.). This *ng* is found in Burmese, Tibetan and other TB languages of Northeast India as well as in the languages of Manipur as in the following examples:

Burmese -	**ngaa**'fish'	**yeingaa** 'thirst'	**nang** 'you'
Tibetan -	**ngaa** 'five'	**zaangpo** 'good'	**wang** 'power'
Thadou -	**ngaa**'fish'	**cangbai** 'husk'	**thing** 'wood'
Paite	**ngaa**'fish'	**tangwai** 'husk'	**thing** 'wood'
Hmar	**ngaa**'fish'	**thingi** 'tea'	**thing** 'wood'
Tangkhul -	**ngam** 'proud'	**aai**'smell'	**mang** 'drink'
Liangmei -	**ngonaa** 'banana'	**cangam** 'wok'	**nang** 'you'
Nocte	**nga** 'I'	**congpo** 'flower'	**bang** 'tree'
Adi	**ngang** 'younger brother'	**angong** 'friend'	**angong** 'friend'

Manipuri-	**ngasi** 'today'	angaang 'kid'	ka**ng** 'mosquito'
	ngaa 'fish'	leinngoi'sand'	uma**ng** 'forest'
			etc.

The medial and final occurrence of */ng/* is very common in others languages even in English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telegu, Malayalam, Tamil etc. In Manipur initial occurrence /ng/ is abundantly found. Even in Chakpa, one extinct language of Manipur, initial occurrence of **/ng/** is found e.g nga 'five', **angaah** 'mother' **ureirong** 'cock' etc.

But Manipuri does not have retroflex sounds which are very much found in Dravidian languages as well as in indo-Aryan languages; this very sound is not found in TB languages also. In writing of Manipuri by Bengali script graphemes, for instance, ট, ঠ, ড, ঢ, ণ, থ, ছ, ড়, ঢ় etc are retroflex sounds. Exactly, Manipuri has none of these sounds; when borrowing the script everything is borrowed without scientific screening whether the native speakers use these sounds or not. In Japanese there is no word ended by consonant (say close syllable word); so when borrowing from other language they added a vowel, for illustration, when borrowing the word ***skirt*** they added a vowel ***o***, then it becomes a Japanese word -i.e. ***skirto.***

English has some sounds, like labiodental fricatives (ʃ, v), inter-dental fricative (θ and ð) and voiceless alveolar affricate and voiced alveolar affricate (tʃ and dz). But Manipuri does not have these sounds. This creates problems; natural languages have their own certain features.

English, Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit and Dravidian languages have long and short vowels contrast. But all the TB languages do not have this contrast; Manipuri is not the exception; in other words it does not this contrast. For instance, অ-আ, ই-ঈ, উ-ঊ are of long and short vowel contrast found in Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit; English has also, for instance,

/a/	/a:/
/o	/o:/
/u/	/u:/

অ-আ, ই-ঈ, and উ-ঊ of Bengali is of long and short vowel contrast; this is used in Manipuri for tone. This is a great mistake for Manipuri language writing in Bengali script. Tone cannot be marked by the long and short vowel contrast.

Tone is one of the characteristics of TB language with an exception in one language, namely, Garo. Manipuri has also this feature and all the languages of Manipuri have tone; Manipuri has two tones:

i	'blood'	un	'skin'
i (fall)	'thatch'	un (fall)	'ice'
la	'banana leaf'	long	'multiple prong spear'
la (fall)	'shallow and broad basket for baking paddy in the sun	long (fall)	'fishing net made of 'bamboo'
caạba	'eating'	kaaba	'climbing'
caaba (fall)	'loitering'	kaaba (fall)	'over burning'

Tone, in brief, is the pitch level which is taken as a phoneme; Manipuri has two tones - level (unmarked) and falling (marked as 'fall').

As a feature Tibeto-Burman languages do not have final consonant cluster: Manipuri does not have final consonant cluster but other language families like Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic have abundant final consonant cluster, *e.g.* band (Hindi), ornament (English).

Another as a feature is the non-availability of the final occurrence of fricative sounds ***s*** or ***h***.

Morphology

Monosyllabic root is a feature of this language and it is also a feature of TB subfamily. Most of the nouns as well as most of the verbs are monosyllabic root as in the following examples:

Nouns:	verbs:
mi 'man'	cat- 'go'
sa 'animal'	thak- 'drink'
ka 'room'	turn- 'sleep'
yum 'house'	yeng- 'look'

However, there are disyllabic roots also in nouns, *e.g* ***kihoṃ*** 'pineapple', ***numit*** 'sun' ***phurit*** 'shirt' etc. like noun, there are a few verbs also, as in the following examples, ***sanna-*** play, ***khatna-*** quarrel, ***kanna-*** be useful, ***aurai-***study

The above verbs are bound: Manipuri verbs without any exception are bound. This is a TB feature. Since the root is bound it is difficult to grasp the meaning at the first instance until or unless an aspect marker or nominalizer ***balpa*** is sufficed. Not only the verb, kinship terms/addressing terms are bound, for instance, *-ne*, *-ba*, *-pa* etc. These can have a meaning when they are prefixed the pronominal markers – ***i–*** first person pronominal marker, *na–* 'second person pronominal marker' and ***ma-*** 'third person pronominal marker, as given in the followings:

i-ne 'my FS' (addressing term) or MBW
na-ne 'your FS'
ma-ne 'his/her FS

Here is the list of kinship terms:

i-ce 'my sister'
i-bai 'my brother-in-law'
i-teima 'my sister-in-law'
i-can 'my younger sister (reference)
i-sen 'my younger brother-in-law'
i-mak 'my-Son/my DH etc.

The boundness of root creates the agglutinating more acceptability. To a verbal root a number of suffixes can be added for the formation of a word, as in the following examples:

tum- han- khi- dri- ngei- da
sleep- cause- evi- NEG- LOC
'when he is not caused sleep .....
caa- min-na-ri-ba-da
eat- com-reci-prog-nom-LOC
'in eating together'

Agglutinating nature is also found in nominal as in the following example:

mahaak-	ki-	da-	mak-	ta	'for his'
he-	Gen-	Dat-	self-	Dat	
ai-	ngon-	gagi	'from me'		
i-	objc-	abl			

Extensive agglutination can be done in this language; this makes indistinctive demarcation between morphology and syntax, it means that no water-tight compartment is drawn between morphology and syntax being highly agglutinating there is ellipses also as given in the following examples.

a) kari-no >keino 'what is that' what-Q.mk
b) hai-ba asi ama-su >haibasimasu
say-NZR prox one-also
'what one says is that also'
c) makhoi-sing asi-gi adu-da >makhoisingsigida
they-pl prox-Gen Dist-Loc 'those which are theirs'

The above mentioned *nominal* bound root and *verbal* bound root are the major grammatical categories, in TB family the two - noun and verb - are the major grammatical categories, regarded as a feature of this family having only two major grammatical categories. From the verbal root only, not from the nominal root, other categories like verbal noun, verb, adjective and adverb, as in the following illustration:

a) [VR + NZR]
Derived Noun
caa + ba > caa-ba 'eating'
thak + pa > thak-pa 'drinking'
b) [V_R + Aspect marker] Verb
caa + ri > caa - ri 'eating'
thak + li > thak - li 'is drinking'
c) [a + [V_R + NZR]] Adjective
a + caa + ba > a - caa - ba 'some one who has taken'
d) [VR + Adv.mk] Adverb
caa + na > caa - na 'by eating'

This type of adverb (modifier) derived by addition of the adverbial marker *-na* to the verbal root happened to be reduplicated which modified the verb.

Manipuri is very peculiar, in the sense that Manipuri verbs have no Gender, Number and Person (GNP) agreement, which directly implicates the absence of Tense morphology in the verb domain: the verb is not reflected for gender, number and person. Manipuri has no grammatical, gender masculine and feminine but it has natural gender-male and female; singular and plural are not inflected to the verb and the personal agreement of the first person, of the second person and of the third person are not also inflected to the verb. The following are the illustrations given respectively:

Gender

1. Memma/Tomba skul cat-li
Memma school go-simp.Asp
'Memma goes to school'
The verb form ***cat-li*** remains the same and no addition or deletion is shown with respect to the subject-Memma or Tomba.

Number

2. lai ama saat-li
flower one bloom-simp.Asp
'A flower is blooming'
3. lai mayaam saat-li
flower many bloom-simpl.Asp
'Many flower are blooming'
No additional suffix or morpheme is added to the verb *saat-li* 'is blooming'. Same is the case for person also:

Person

4. ai 'I'
nang 'you' heinou caa-'I'
mahak 'he' mango
eat-simp.Asp
Any particular inflectional marker is added or deleted for the respective persons. This shows no inflectional marker is used for the respective person.

Manipuri uses a spatio-temporal noun (STN) which occurs at the end of a Noun NP, in case it occurs in a structure that is treated as Postposition which goes with a locative marker -ta/da. Postposition is opposite to preposition of English, like, ***on, in, under, below, beside*** etc. examples are given here:

1. laairik adu tebal mathak-ta tham-mi
   book Det table post-case keep-Simp.Asp 'The book is kept on the table'

Postposition is a feature of Manipuri language as well as the feature of TB language. The postposition item ***mathak*** 'on' takes a locative marker ***-ta/da*** which ends the NP and the verb ***tham-mi*** 'keep-simp.asp. Which does not speak about the tense.

Tense is not distinctive in TB languages as a feature; in the same way tense is not distinctive in Manipuri also. This non distinctiveness of tense is one of the key structural features of TB languages (Bauman 1975). In Manipuri the aspect is more predominant than tense (see Yashawanta Singh, 1995, 1999). Manipuri has four aspects—simple, progressive, perfect and unrealized (Irrealis). These are all expressed by affixes (suffixes).

TB languages use affixes very productively; they use prefixes and suffixes and the number of suffixes is more than that of prefixes: this is very distinctive. The role of affixes is very great in Manipuri (see Yashawanta Singh, 1995, 1999). Various types of functional sentences can be formed by addition of respective markers to the verb.

Functional Sentences

a) Declarative sentence is formed by addition of the aspect marker: simply expressing a statements, for instance,

2. mahak caa thak-i
   he tea drink-Simple Asp.
   'He takes tea'

b) Interrogative sentence is constructed by addition of the question marker ***-ra-la*** to the derived noun or pronoun. So this marker is treated as Interrogative verb 'be' form functioning as a linking verb, copula. See how it is used:

3. mahaak John-la
   he John-'Q-be'
   Is he John?

4. mahaak   skul   cat-pa-ra
he   school   go-NZR-Q.mk
'Has he gone to school?'

5. mahaak-la   Rangoon   cat-lu-ba-du
he- Q.be   Rangoon   visit -NZR-Det
'Is he the person who had been to Rangoon?'

c) Imperative sentence is formed by suffixing the command marker ***-u/o*** to the verb, like ***thak-o*** 'drink'. And request is formed by addition of the honorific marker - ***bi/-pi*** between the verbal root and the command marker, as in sentence; ***thak-pi-yu*** 'please have it'.

6. Vr + bi-Honoffic.mk. + comd.mk.>Request
caa + bi + ro   'Please have it

In polite form Manipuri is quite different from other TB languages. Manipuri uses suffix morpheme ***-bi/pi*** along with a lexical polite form; ***canbiduna/thoujanbiduna***. Further more degree of polite is conveyed by means of using archaic lexical form in which the constraint is that the archaic noun should *go* with the archaic verb otherwise it is not acceptable.

7.(1) caak caa- bi - ro
rice eat-Hon- Comd
'Please have your meal'

(II) Luk haa-bi-ro
rice eat-Hon-Comd
'Please have your meal

*(III) luk caa-bi-ro

Sentence 7(111) is not acceptable because archaic noun *luk* 'rice' cannot go with non-archaic verb *caa* 'eat' and vice versa.

d) Negative sentence is constructed by addition of negative marker ***-da/-ta*** followed by a aspect marker. It has different forms since the *a* of ***-da/ta*** assimilates to the respective aspect markers, as given here:

V_R + Nagative + Aspect
caa + da + i
-de
thak + ta + i
-te
] simple Aspect

ta
da
] – Progressive Aspect– > $^{dr}/_{tri}$ (neg + Prog)
ri
li

ta]+ Perfect Aspect > tre/dre
da] re/le

However the negative marker used in unrealized aspect has a purely different form, that is, -roi/loi ***caa-roi*** 'will not take'. Different aspects of negation can be formed by addition of respective markers. Prohibitive is formed by addition of **-nu** to the verbal root, for instance, ***caa-nu*** 'don't eat'.

Besides these, affixes used in the formation of various functional types of sentences, there are many suffixes. They can be categorized into nominal suffixes and verbal suffixes. It has extensive verb morphology; it exclusive suffix with more limited prefixation.

Suffix

There are a number of nominal suffixes: they are number marker (-sing 'plural mk'), case marker (-na, -da), similarilive (-kum/-gumba) definitive (-ti/di), demonstrative (-du/-tu), emphatic (-mak), etc. the verbal suffixes are numerous: they are directional (-sin, -thok, -khat and th/d), honorific (-bi/pi), causative (-han/hal), reflexive (-caaza), commutative (-min), reciprocal (-na), evidential (-ram/lam, khi), mood (-tou/dou), aspect (-i, ri, re, gani), prospective (-ra/la), habitual - kan/gan), copula (-ni) etc. that is why it is said that in TB languages each syllable has meaning. Besides all these suffixes, there are some prefixes also.

Prefixes

Prefixes in Manipuri is limited and can be categorized into two - Nominal prefix and verbal prefix.

Nominal prefixes are very limited; they are all pronominal prefixes, say, ***-i*** 'first person pronominal marker'; ***na-*** second person pronominal marker and ***ma-*** third person pronominal marker.

Example

i-ce 'my sister'
na-ce 'your sister'
ma-ce 'his sister' etc.

Verbal prefixes are more than nominal prefixes. They are ***-i/ pang/pung-***, negative polarity item (NPI) suk- There are certain prefixes which needs particular verbs. Those prefixes are ***ta-***, ***ca-phat-***, ***pltong-***, ***khang-*** etc. These prefixes are grammaticalized, in the sense that after their prefixation the verb is reduplicated, otherwise they are not acceptable. Another grammatical property is that they can occur in all the environments - negative as well as positive.

i-/pang-/pung-/ + caa caa-i
eateat-Sim.Asp
'eat anything' (positive sense)
i ## pang/pung-/ + caa caa-de
'eat hardly' (Negative)

ta-rang ta-rang tho-rak-le
-bright bright out-Dir-Perf.
'coming out very brightly'

ca-bet ca-bet law-wi
-soft -soft be-Simp asp
'very very soft'

khang-saw saw-wi
-angry angry-simp-Asp
'suddenly becoming angry'

There is a particular prefix *suk*-which is called Negative Polarity Item (NPI) because it occurs only in negative environment as in the following example:

suk-caa caa-de 'never eat.....'
eat eat-Neg
* suk-caa caa-i

These are the morphological as well as morpho-syntactic feature of Manipuri language. In word formation compounding is more productive: There are various compound words, say,

(a) **Noun + Noun > Noun**
yum + saa > yumsa 'domestic animal'
house animal
yum + thak > yumthak'roof'
house top
chaak + khao > chaakhao 'stomach'
rice - bag

(b) **Noun + Adjective > Noun**
phi + ngaang > phingaang 'red cloth'

cloth red
hui + zaao > huizao 'big dog'
lam – pak
land + broad > lampak 'ground'

(c) **Noun + Verb**
mei + khet 'matches'
fire - strike
kok + set > kokset 'head gear'
head wear

Syntax

Manipuri is a SOV language; this is generally known as verb final language. In this word order, adjective precedes the noun; the determiner and numeral follow the noun. Manipuri has no relative pronoun; relative clause is constructed by participle *i.e.* by using nominalizer ***ba-/pa-*** to the verb (Functional sentences are discussed above. It may also be mentioned that affixes play a great role in various sentence formation).

Example:

(a)	yum	yum-da..... 'to all houses'	
	house	house-Loc	
(b)	angang	angangba	lei...'red flowers'
	red	red	flower
(c)	tap-na	tap-na 'slowly slowly'	
	slow-Adv	slow-Adv.	
(d)	kari	kari	'which are'
	which	which	

Reduplication is also a feature: it is also a pan-Indic feature. Hindi has various types of reduplication. Reduplication in Manipuri is possible in noun, pronoun, verb, adjectives, adverb and wh-question words. Reduplication indicates the meaning of plurality, emphatic meaning and adjectival meaning.

As a kind of reduplication, Manipuri has a peculiar feature which is not found in any TB languages of the Northeast, that is, semantic reduplication (different form but giving the same meaning), as in the following examples:

laija	ising	'water'	
		Meetei	
		Moirang	(in **Lanmit Lon**)
paamba	kei	'tiger'	
		Khuman	
		Meetei	(in **Khuman Kangleirol**)
cung	lang	'net'	
		Seloy Lamgmai	
		Meetei	(in **San Kaw**)

Semantic reduplication shows that various groups speaking various languages were merged into the Meetei during the process of state formation in the 14th century. Semantic reduplication is the sign of the combination of various language-speaking- groups (Yashawanta Singh 1995, 2002).

CONCLUSION

These features may be the regarded as the basis for considering Manipuri as a separate branch under Kuki-Chin family of languages. Manipuri has more written records and abundant literature than that of other languages in the Northeastern India.

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The Chronicles of Manipur

We find accounts of the reign of septinal clan dynasties, their feuds even before the Christian era, their amalgamation, emergence of the composite Meitei people at the close of the 17th century, conflicts with neighbouring countries, evolution of social institutions, modification of traditional polity, and advent of religious faiths, introduction of ways of learning and also types of sports. All these have been made known to us by different forms of chronicles, left behind by our ancestors. The works are locally known as *Ningthouron* and most of them have literary worth. While the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* is couched mainly in prose; the *Ningthourol Lambuba*, the *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba* and the *Chada Laihui* are in poetry. To a historiographer, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* has a pride of place for its broad sweep of time from the first century down to the present day, as its chronological recording is still being maintained and for the coverage of manifold events—social, political, economic and religious. As given in the work itself, its compilation based on the Saka era was taken up during the reign of King Kyamba (1467 – 1508) with, however, accounts of the previous kings beginning with Nongda Lairen Pakhangba who ascended the throne in 33 A.D. The earlier part was reconstructed, most probably, from memory and other manuscripts. Its opening lines are:

> "Praying to the Lord of the Universe, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* will be written: let there be no hindrance .... On the 45th year of Pakhangba's reign the 1st Saka year was introduced."

It records the visit of Samlong, younger brother of Sukhampha, the Pong king in Saka 620. This has been corroborated by the account given in the Shan chronicle as quoted by R.B. Pemberton in his noted work, *The Eastern Frontier of British India* (1835). King Kyamba also introduced in Saka 1407 the practice Cheithaba, which names each year after the person who volunteers before thinking to take upon himself all the sorrows and sufferings of the country for that year and this is being observed with all the rituals till today. From the accession of Paikhomba to the throne on the 5th Wakching (Poura-Magha) of Saka 1589 the historical events have been recorded with days of the week and the corresponding dates and months. Though most parts of the work, being in prose, are monotonous, there are purple patches and moving lines which can provide some relief. The chronicles can reproduce an eyewitness account of it:

> "Then Major Paona said, "My countryman, the enemy shall land in our camp, whereas ours cannot in theirs. The field guns too have not arrived. There is sure death for us; however, we will never retreat".
>
> Saying this he charged against the enemy with two unsheathed swords. As the fight raged on from the early morning of Thursday, the 14th of Sajibu (Chaitra-Baisakh) Saka 1813, the Meitei force was surrounded by the British cavalry. Undaunted, Major Paona, Major Chongtha and other officers took to hand to hand fight and many fell in the battle. But the British footmen were relentlessly advancing and the Meiteis in the front were completely wiped out and only some hundred in the rear survived. Many on the side of the enemy too dropped dead and wounded. At sunset, both sides retired to their respective camps."

The *Ningthourol Lambuba* marks a distinct character in form and content from the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and the title itself clearly stands, it is exclusively the account of the kings who performed coronation ceremonies. Unlike the latter it deals with the genealogy of kings from the mothers' side. The accounts of each king are, in general, of little historical importance particularly up to the 9th king, Sameirang. The difference between the two can be discovered from the examples given below. The *Cheitharol Kumbaba* presents the reign of Sameirang thus:

"Sameirang became king in saka 440. From Tamanglang issued forth the family title of the Ningthouja clan. The Angoms were subdued and their leader Kwakpa Thawanthaba was put to death. The practice of entertaining the nobles commenced from his time. Sameirang reigned for fifty years."

Whereas the *Lambuba* records:

> "The name of your grandfather the Meitei king son of your great grandmother, Kaireima the Noble queen, is called Sameirang. He performed his pyrrhic dance on the eastern boundary of his kingdom at Langchan Liroulok. And how is the name of the place derived? According to the *sallois*, a fishing net is known as *usha*, an umbrella as *tukpu* and a lake as *theba*, having been drained, suddenly faced a fierce storm and it strongly lashed the settlement of the *langmais* blowing down trunks of trees into the water where they were catching fish. And that place has since been known as *Langmaikumba Ushata*. The man in charge of the fishing got his trap entangled in the *lanchanglee* (loose cane strap); henceforth the place took the name *Langehal Liroulok*."

Thus the work is conspicuous by the absence of dates and years of important events, references to the neighbouring countries and migrations to this place, and concentrates on recounting the individual achievements of the Meitei kings and their glorification. The periods of king Khagemba, Pamheiba or Garibniwaj and Noinai Chingthangkhomba or Bhagyachandra are important milestones in the history of Manipur, during which not only great territorial and political achievements were scored but also social and religious stirrings of great consequence took place. But it very conveniently glosses over the latter aspects and dwells at length on the martial prowess of the kings and their consequent flaunting of new titles.

The *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba*, as the title implies, is the account of Moirang kings and though cast in the likeness of the *Ningthourol Lambuba*, the language is comparatively simple and more musical. The introduction consisting of the innovation and the graphic description of the region along with its historical background is, indeed, a fine effusion of choice words. Reminding one of the inspired portrayals of Panthoibi, the Meitei princess with her protean variety, the writer here also is carried away and the words rush forth like the waters of a hill-stream.

And a king is described thus:

> "Your grandsire is known by the name Yiwang Laikacheng Atengpa. The king noted for his martial feats in the kingdom of Moirang carried his arms towards the east. He then cut off a corner of Lilong Sahanpat where Prince Ngangoi Yoimangpa ran into his younger brother during the course of dredging the great rivers and proceeded to Taknakha through Yamla Iamthanthi. And there is a story of how the place took its name .... The Moirang king without dalliance left it behind, marched across the Lambui village and raided the Youkok village. Thus by sheer dint of his courage, he forced the chief of the Lambuis to submission and with this the Moirang king appropriated to himself an additional title Lanthaba Yiwang Laikacheng Atengpa."

So the heroic tenor here is no less evident than in the *Ningthourol Lambuba*.

The *Chada Laihui* may not be outright called a chronicle for lack of accounts of momentous events; it is rather a genealogy of the Meitei kings from the distaff side and is perhaps unique in its kind in any literature. It begins first with the name of *Chakha Nuron piron Yambi*, mother of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, who ascended the throne in 33 A.D. Generally, each description is opened with an interrogatory sentence enquiring about the sire of the queen. The answer follows with interesting anecdotes and homonyms accompanied by amazing references which could again draw up another question relating to her mother, the answer of which, in turn, is to be provided in like manner. Thus the name of the reigning king comes last.

The *Angomlon Laihui* a chronicle of the kings of Angom clan, is cast in the pattern of the *Ningthourol Lambuba* and the *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba*. It also recounts the achievements of the Angom kings and how they were named with the indication of the respective king's mother at the end of each king's account. The style of composition, as in the two previous accounts, is bombastic and marked by circumlocution. One of the earlier kings is described thus:

"Your grandsire who settled in Ongdei, issued forth the tall mountains of the moon shining high in the sky and made his earthward journey under the shade of a white canopy, accounted with bow, arrow and sword and attended by torch-bearers. Thus in broad- daylight, he descended the ladder of gold, stepped on the marble foothold and established himself as the ruler of Kanglei. Later he was known as the conqueror of 'Tekhao' and addressed as 'Taret Senbung Lokpa', that is one who amasses gongs made of bell-metal.

The account suggests that the Angom king preceded Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, the first king of the Ningthouja clan, which in some way comes to explain an Angom king's coronation always preceding that of a Meitei king and also apportioning of the most central seat to him later in the Meitei king's court. The work, among other things, throws light on the method of constructing a traditional house and also on the prevalence of observing 'married woman's day' during the month of Hiyanggei (Oct-Nov), which is much in practice till today as 'Ningon Chakkouba' and supposed to have been introduced by Maharaja Chandrakirti (1850-1866) to coincide with 'Bhadri Dwitiya' of Bengal.

The *Khuman Kangleiron* is a chronicle of the Khuman clan which held its sway in the south of the valley adjacent to the Meitei territory but composed as late as the middle of the 18th century when Chit Sai, the third son of Maharaja Garibniwaj succeeded his father on the throne with a Khuman princess as the queen. It was, however, at the behest of the old king who, out of the new relationship, strongly felt the desire of reconstructing an account of the once prosperous Khuman dynasty that Keibiram, a faithful minister during his reign and also a scion of the Khuman blood, was engaged to write it out. Unlike the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, it is not furnished with chronology of the events, nor is it concerned with social, economic, religious and political developments that took place in the kingdom. And again unlike the *Ningthourol Lambuba* it is not much concerned to flaunt martial achievements of the respective kings (though some briefly highlighted), but is there rather to parade the names of successive kings with lively anecdotes of how such titles were derived and other interesting events that took place during the reign of each king.

Present also are place names with engaging background stories tagged to them and quite curiously each account is preceded by the name of the queen who bore the king, inseparably supported by the antecedent story of the name. Beginning with kings of ten generations, the fifth of the historical kings Adon Kacheng Wayeng is found coeval with Pensiba, the Meitei king who reigned from 379 to 498 A.D.

Though there are explicit references to the mutual animosity between the Khumans and Moirangs and the consequent bloody skirmishes, the writer very purposely maintains silence over any such inimical relationship between the first and the Meiteis who were, in fact, intermittently at daggers drawn during the earlier period of history. The chronicle does not proceed further than the early part of the 14th century as the Khumans found that their political life and society were no more viable and sought refuge in the Meitei society.

The composition is, by and large, poetic but not obviously devoid of the flourish one come across in the *Ningthourel Lambuba* or the *Chada Laihui.*

Unfortunately, despite the availability of such important chronicles no proper history of Manipur has yet been constructed. We come across in the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* armed conflicts of the Meiteis with the Burmese in 1263 A.D. and the Cacharis in 1264 during the reigns of Thangbi Lanthaba and Kongyamba. But we have to remain content only with the fact that the Manipuris or the Meiteis were a civilized people since early times and these chronicles were composed much ahead of such works found in other parts of India like the *Buranji* of Assam (13th century), *Raja Tarangini* of Kashmir, *Bakhlier.* of the Marathas (16th century) and *Twarikhi* of the Moghuls (16th century).

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Sanamahi Religion

INTRODUCTION

The Meetei people, who basically consists of seven clans (*yeks/ salais*) are the indigenous people of Manipur, the state in the eastern part of India. The ancient name for this land was "Kangleipak". They worshipped a number of deities under their indigenous system of religion, which is known as *"Sanamahi Religion"*. Of all these deities, the most prominent one is god Lainingthou Sanamahi, who is believed to be the king of all gods. He is regarded as the creator and sustainer of the universe. Sanamahi religion is a socially and legally recognised form of indigenous religion of the Meeteis. It has a unique component which embodies systematic rites, rituals and profound religious philosophy. This religious system was adopted as the state religion of Manipur prior to the introduction of Vaisnava Hinduism in the 18th century A.D. during the time of king Garibniwaja/Pamheiba (1709-1748).

1. COSMOGONY IN SANAMAHI RELIGION

In the primal religion of the Meeties, the divine theory of creation and evolution of the universe is a significant part of its philosophy and ritualistic practices. There is far more ground in asserting that one should first study Meetei Cosmogony if one wants to know more about the Sanamahi Religion. According to the Meetei cosmogony, in the beginning before the creation for the universe there was nothing except *Yaibirel Sidaba* (*Yaḅiral* = supreme soul, *sidaba* = Immortal). He is also known as *Poklen Pokpa satlen satpa* (Supreme Progenitors) and *Tengbanba Mapu* (*Tengbanba* Universe, *Mapu* Lord) He is Hayum/Hung, the amalgamation of *Hahi/Hei* (Supreme Father) and *Haya/Ha* (Supreme Mother). He was in the midst of *Amamba* (darkness) and Ahangba (emptiness). He wished to create the Universe for his own satisfaction. So He brought forth *Leimarel Sidabi* (Immortal supreme Mother) from the left side of His spiritual body. They took a deep look at each other and then Leimarel sidabi brought forth three sons, namely Atingkok, Atiya and Konjel Tingthokpa from herself.

Tengbanba Mapu Yaibirel Sidaba asked his eldest son Atingkok to create the Universe. Hence, Ạtingkok was known as Asheeba (being as on errand).⁽⁴⁾ *Asheeba* created seven orders of the sky namely, (i) *Leiyikon* 2) *Awangkon* 3) *Langbakqn* 4) *Nungnangkon* 5) *Koroukon* 6) Ash ikon and 7) *Jambakon.*⁽⁵⁾ Then he brought forth water from himself and began to create the earth out of water.⁽⁶⁾ But his youngest brother destroyed it again and again. Asheeba reported the matter to his father. His father Tengbanba Mapu brought forth goodness Nongthang Leima who used all her lures and attracted *Konjil Tingthokpa Lẹithingai* (Destroyer of the earth). While the two (*Nongthangleima* and *Haraba Leithingai*) were merrily singing *paosha-Ishei* (Question answer song) Asheeba created seven layers of the earth, namely i) *Malangkon* 2) *Maleikoji* 3) *Pongleikon* 4) *Leikhakon* 5) *Leinungkjon* 6) *Khamleikon* and 7) *Khambungkon.* (7) In order to level the uneven earth. Asheeba danced 9 (nine) *Thenggourols*, namely 1) *Akao Thenggou* 2) *Leiphan Thenggou* 4) *Leichai Thenggou* 4) *Nungphan Thenggou* 5) *Leipek Thenggou* 6) *Leinet Thenggou* 7) *Atan Thenggou* 8) *Langkak Thenggou* and 9) *Akharr Thenggou* with 9 (nine) gods and 7 (seven) goddesses.⁽⁸⁾ Thus, the earth was made habitable. Asheeba sang *iejroi-Ṇongloi shei* at the completion of the creation of the Heaven and the earth. Then Asheeba created moss, water hyacinth, grass, bamboo and tree out of the bubbles of water.⁽⁹⁾ His father asked him to create man. In his attempt to create man he created earth worm, *Ngamu* (a kind of fish), frog, owl, pig and monkey.⁽¹⁰⁾ Ultimately on the advice of his father Asheeba created man in the image of his Father.⁽¹¹⁾ Thus man was the perfect form of a being with divine disposition. His father Yaibirel Sidaba (Immortal Supreme soul) breathed life into every being created by his son, Asheeba. Then on the advice of his father Asheeba explored himself and all his divine qualities and spread out all over the universe. His belly merged with the sky, his back with the earth, his right eye with the Sun, his left eye with the Moon, his blood with the water and his breath with the air.⁽¹²⁾ Hence forth, Asheeba was known as *Sanamahi* (Sana = Sannaheba = Spreading all over, *mahi* = power and essence).⁽¹³⁾ In the Meetei cosmogony this unique explosion of the spiritual body of Asheeba is called *Thirel Pokkhaiba* (*Thirel* = body, *Pokhaiba* = explosion).⁽¹⁴⁾

Tengbanba Mapu, the Lord of the Universe in order to ascertain who would be the temporal king in the days when human society comes into existence asked his three sons to go round the earth and assured them that the one who had accomplished the task first would be made the king of the world. Sanamahi and Atiya set out for the journey round the earth. In the meantime, Konjil Tingthokpa approached his Mother and sought her advice. She advised him to circle round the throne of his father seven times because his father is not only the lord of the world but He himself represents the world in His manifestation. Accordingly, Kongil Tingthokpa moved round the throne of his father, When the Lord noticed His younger son circumbulating round Him, he was deeply impressed and made him the king of the world. Later on, Kongil Tingthokpa came to be known as *Pakhangba* (Pa = father, *Khangba* = to know; "*Pakhangba*" = one who knows his father).⁽¹⁵⁾ When Sanamahi came back from his grand journey he was very angry on seeing his youngest brother on the throne. As he tries to destroy the earth his father intervened and declared that he himself is god Sanamahi and god Sanamahi is also *Tengbanba Mapu.* He readily declared that his son god Sanamahi would be *Lamingthou* (*Lai* = deity, *Ningthou* = King), the king of all deities and that Lainingthou sanamahi's abode would be at the south western corner of every house hold of mankind and further told him that Goddess *Leimarel Sidabi* as a mother would also reside by the northern side of the *Leimarel Ka* (*Ka* = room) for looking after him.⁽¹⁶⁾ Thus god Sanamahi was enthroned as the king of the spiritual world.

When the human society comes into existence, four *Pakhangbas,* namely, 1) *Pakhang Yoirel Tompokpa* 2) *Tangja Lilha pakhangba* 3) *Sendreng Lolang Pakhangba* and 4) *Nongda Lairel pakhangba* who were regarded as the incarnations of the descendants of god pakhangba were the kings of four *chaks* (ages), namely *Hayi chak, Haya chak, Khunnung chak* and *Langba* (*Konma*) *chak* ⁽¹⁷⁾ So, upto Leishemba

Sanajaoba, son of king Okendrajit the royal descendants are regarded as the descendant of *Ibudhou Pakhangba* by the orthodox followers of "Sanamahis" (Sanamahi Religion).

2. ORIGIN OF SANAMAHISM

Before the historical period there were three ages or chaks. namely *Hayi chak*, *Haya chak* and *Khunnung chak*. According to "*Njngthou Kangbarol*", an archaic text, king Kangba was the first king of *Hayi chak*. Some detailed accounts of the king are also mentioned in some archaic texts, such as, "*Leithak Leikharol*", "*Sakok Lamlel Ahanba*", "*Thirel Layat*" etc. Yengkhoiba Bhagya who transliterated "*Leithak Leikharol*" into Bengali scripts categorically expressed his view that king Kangba introduced Sanamahi Religion.(18) During his reign an idol of god Sanamahi was carved out of stone and worshipped it as a state god on the top of the hill known as *Waroi Ching*(19) "*Sakok Lamlel Ahanba*" an archaic text says that *truth* was their religion. Their god was god Sanamahi. *Truth* meant realization of God Sanamahi. Truth was the way to salvation.(20) The people worshipped God Sanamahi and their religion was belief in *Truth* and *Justice*. Truth means, according to *Sakok Samlel* the knowledge, and realization of God Sanamahi.(21) According to the "Ningthou Kangbarol", the archaic text, whenever there was a dispute in the Kingdom, in order to determine who was in the wrong, a post with a flag was erected in front of God Sanamahi Temple at a place known as Waroiching. As soon as the post was erected, a strong wind began to blow. Falling down of the flag post indicated which party was wrong. Because of that, the hill top where the god "Sanamahi Temple was installed was called *Waroi Ching* (*Waroi*-final judgement, *ching*= hill) (22) In the three ages, during the proto-historical period, god Sanamahi was worshipped as the supreme personal God.

3. SANAMAHISM DURING THE HISTORICAL PERIOD
(33 A.D. - 1709 A.D.)

Nongda Lairel Pakhangba was the first king in the Historical period. He ascended the throne of Manipur in 33 A.D. He installed three temples and worshipped *Tengbanba Mapu* (Lord of the Universe), Ima *Leimarel Sidabi* (Immortal Supreme Mother) and God Sanamahi. (23)

During his reign god Sanamahi was worshipped not only as a state God but also as a household deity. One important religious ceremony known as *Sanamahi chenghongba* was celebrated by offering uncooked rice and chanting *Sanamahi Ahonglon* (hymm)(24) from the study of the political history of Kangleipak/Manipur was known that there was a political chaos and devastation just before his coming to the throne. Perhaps, he renovated and gave a new life to the system of worship of god Sanamahi as one of the measures taking up for the unification of the kingdom,

King Khagemba(1597-1652) moulded an idol of God Sanamahi out of bell-metal and worshipped it as a state God.(25) An idol of God Sanamahi is worshipped still today at *Tolong Yumpham Haying Khongban* (the present First Manipur Rifles Compound) as a state God. As a *Sagei* (Sub-clan) deity, god Sanamahi is worshipped by all the families of the clans at the house of the *Sagei Piba* (Chief of the *Sagei*) of *Sajibu Cheiraoba* (New Year's Day of the Meeties) The shape of the symbolic form of god Sanamahi at the house of the *Sagei Piba* is round like a coin which is moulded out of bell metal by a member of *Senjam* or *Aheibam Sagei* (Sub-clan) on the advice of the palace *Amaiba* (*Priest* physician)(26) Normally the symbolic form of the god is kept in the l*ubak* (basket box) with sweet scented flowers on a throne made of *Utang waa* (a kind of bamboo) at the south western corner of the house. On this day the god is worshipped for longevity and prosperity of all the families of the *Sagei* in the current years. On this day in every house of the. Meeties God Sanamahi is worshipped by offering uncooked rice and vegetables before cooking with some obligatory items of fruits and flowers. Besides this ceremonial worship, god Sanamahi is also worshipped every day normally in the evening when the sun just sets but the crimson rays of the setting sun are still in the western sky by offering pine wood candle light for blessings. It is customary for a Meetei to bow down to god Sanamahi before going to an important business or journey. When there is a serious illness in a family an *Amaiba* (priest physician) is specially engaged to worship this god by offering wax-candle light and other items.(27) God Sanamahi is also worshipped as *umang lai* (guardian deity of a village or part of village at Sugnu and Moirang).(28) Tribal people of Kangleipak/Manipur, Viz Kuki, Kabui, Kom, Purum, Chothe etc., also worshipped god Sanamahi by offering fowls, ducks, dogs and pigs(29).

Sanamahism as a state religion was at its zenith during the reign of King Khagemba (1597-1652). From the study of Meetei cosmogony, traditional beliefs and practices we know that god Sanamahi is a benevolent and beneficent god who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. God Sanamahi is the ground, guide and goal of man.(30) In Sanamahism he is worshipped with the belief that 1) God Sanamahi as Tengbanba Mapu (Lord of the universe) Himself appearing for the purpose of creation of the universe, 2) God Sanamahi is the creator and sustainer of all things and beings in the universe and 3) God Sanamahi is the way to Tengbanba Mapu (way to Salvation).(31) As regards the status of god Sanamahi it may be mentioned that the number of *Puyas* (old texts) on god Sanamahi far exceeds that of the *Puyas* on any other god. There are not less then nine Puyas on god Sanamahi, namely 1) *Sanamahi Thirel* 2) *Sanamahi Phankhong* (3) *Sanamahi Thelol* 4) *Sanamahi Naoyom* 5) *Sanamahigi Maming* (*Mingkhei*) 6) *Sanamahi Laikan* 7) *Sanamahi Laihui* 8) *Sanamahi Lamhing* 9) *Sanamahi Leikhan Nongkhan*. And there are 168 (One hundred and sixty eight) different names being attributed to god Sanamani. This Unique feature is not seen in the case of other gods. The different names of god Sanamahi are - 1) *Asheeba* 2) *Ongthi* 3) *Taorojnaj* 4) *Ung chilik* 5) *Unp Chikhom* 6) *Ung Chiwak* 7) *Ung Chilit* 8) *Ung Chitok* 9) *Ung Chisa* 10) *Ung Chikhum* 11) *Mi Hing sang* 16) *Leinung Khom silipa* 17) *Lairel porong Khotpa* 18) *Songbu chirai Tangba* 19) *Konde Khurai Tangba* 20) *Sorarel Amamba* 21) *Achiba* 22) *Mamlel Manba* 23) *Thoikhoiba* 24) *Akheiba* 25) *Nongnanglel Akhuba* 26) *Konkhei Atamba* 27) *Nonggachao Nonglanglel Achouba* 28) *Leiranglel Takjiatpa* 29) *Nonglanglel Apongba* 30) *Nungkon Naba* 31) *Konsourel Keishouba* 32) *Chirel Nganglenba* 33) *Sana Tillirei* 34) *Kangjaoba* 35) *Yumit* 36) *Samadon Ayangba* 37) *Lairingthou Hanba* 38) *Lei rum lei* 39) *Jonglumlel* 40) *Sungmaru* 41) *Konggoirel* 42) *Ngangkup Fet* 43) *Chummirakthang* 44) *Kupphet Haiphirak* 45) *Chiranglen Kingnaiba* 46) *Keirung Hanba* 47) *Chiranglen Kingnaiba* 46) *Keikari Tatta* 50) *Thangkang Mukha Nanglel* 51) *Sawa Tuponglel* 52) *Leirak Sathuba* 53) *Khongban Lallumba* 54) *Yenakha Paotaba* 55) *Thongngrel* 56) *Saikang Poliba* 57) *Phaktem Ariba* 55) *Thongngarel* 56) *Saikang Pohba* 57) *Phaktem Ariba* 58) *Korouhanba* 59) *Pinu Khanu* 60) *Hei Ha Hung Hing Hing Khing Khing*

61) *Likla Yennou Hun* 62) *Yennou Maton Hup* 63) *Likla Maton Ho Ho* 64) *Pit Hum Pit.* 65) *Pit Pit Sumyeng* 66) *Menang Khamba* 67) *Layollang Tanouba* 68) *Sangyen Khomba* 69) *Teng Hing Yairangba* 70) *Tilphum Cholel Pipa* 71) *Sanamahi* 72) *Sanamahjrel* 73) *Khomlel* 74) *Phal* 75) *Hui Naha Khwangnouba* 76) *Pamel Yringba* 77) *Pamel Uthaba* 78) *Korou* 79) *Ewa* 80) *Mingthengtak* 81) *Kourangoi* 82) *Chachat* 83) *Ngang Ho Hingnap* 84) *Me He He He Hum Hum Ge He* 85) *Hum Alang Hum Alang* 86) *Hei chi Ha hou* 87) *He Thup* 88) *Hum Alang Hum Alang* 86) *Hei chi Ha Hou* 87) *He thup* 88) *Sana Tampha Yainingthou* 89) *Sathong Ariba* 90) *Huito* 91) *Sanamahi Yaimaba* 92) *Misilthong Amihing* 93) *Angngo* 94) *Kha Khing* 95) *Santhong Apanba* 96) *Hei Hung Hing Khing Khing* 97) *Santhong Njngthou Sanamahi* 98) *Heijyiahi* 99) *Ha Mahi* 100) *Huing Mahi* 101) *Theba Orireng* 102) *Chikpha* 103) *Chiksou* 104) *Pukyeng* 105) *Waira* 106) *Hei Ha ting ting* 107) *Khak* 108) *KhhTgKhm Ningthou Ngangchik Ngapeiba* 111) *Apakpha* 112) *Itum* 113) *Mara Ring ting* 114) *Pisatao* 115) *Hanba Kokchao* 116) *Hannu Laikham* 117) *Leirum* 118) *Mari Abgchinap Mateba* 119) *Amari Usang Khing* 120) *Pongthanglen* 121) *Langnou* 122) *Thongkhalel* 123) *Heinga Hisukak* 124) *Lupjngang Tarang* 125) *Khiring Tarangba* 126) *Ngang Tarangba* 127) *Ngang Tarengba* 128) *Nong Tarengba* 129) *Kongtanglel* 130) *Michileng* 131) *Lup Lup Inga He He* 132) *Penga Penga Penga He he he suk suk* 133) *Tarang Ngang* 134) *Hei Hing Kole Hoi He Ha Ha* 135) *Mikupleng* 136) *Khoirel Linngouba* 137) *Sup Maru* 138) *Chi Hing sang Hing* 139) *Leitangang Turengba* 140) *Sup Maru* 138) *Chi Hing sang Hing* 139) *Leitangang Turengba* 140) *Ngang Hing* 141) *Meithalel* 142) *Ung Kal* 143) *Ikak Trang* 144) *Ngang Hing* 141) *Meithalel* 142) *Ung Kal* 143) *Ikak Tarang* 144) *Ngang Hing sang Hing* 145) *Ngantureng* 146) *Leiranglel Leitakpa* 147) *Sanahing Wansoubun* 148) *TM Sidaba* 149) *Pungit Tngwang* 150) *Ung Chikha* 151) *Ung Ulali* 152) *Tingngang Tarangba* 153) *Mitalel* 154) *Hungkong Ik* 155) *Tisup tarang* 156) *Meitreng* 157) *Karangba* 158) *Aa* 159) *Ponglel Tuthaba* 160) *Khuikhui Chanem* 161) *Kasa Nongkhai Lainingthou* 162) *Pung Yeng Yeng Soujinnaba* 163) *Kanglei Ningthouba* 164) *Hum Pit Taho* 165) *Yai Tarangba* 166) *Hei Yairenba* 167) *Hup Hup Ingangang He He He* and 168) *Amari chinap Mateba*(32).

From the account given above, it is quite evident that God Sanamahi is the paramount god of all the gods according to the Meitei pantheon.

4. OTHER GODS AND GODDESSES OF SANAMAHISM

In Sanamahism not only god Sanamahi but other deities, namely 1) *Tenbanba Mapu Yaibirel Sidaba* (Lord of the Universe Immortal Supreme soul) 2) *Ima Leimarel Sidabi* (Immortal supreme Mother) *Konjil Tingthokpa Pakhangba* were also worshipped. A large number of *Umang Lais* (deities in the sylvan groves), who are believed as the descendants/incarnations of the three cosmogony gods and three goddesses were also worshipped as the protectors and guardians of villages parts of a villages or four particular directions, namely South-west, North-East, South-East and North-West⁽³³⁾ In this indigenous religion of the Meeteis such goddesses as *Phou-oibi* (goddess of rice and wealth), *Imoinu* (Goddess of the dwelling house) and some forces/objects of nature, namely the sky, the Air, the Fire, the water, the earth, the sun and the Moon were also worshipped at certain rites⁽³⁴⁾.

The Meeteis believe that their ancestors become divine souls after death. They worshipped the departed souls of their ancestors on particular days of particulars months of the year. The ritual is performed by an *Amaiba* (priest and medicine man) during the night. This ritual is called *Apokpa Khurumba* (*Apokpa* = ancestor, *Khurumba* = bouring down). *Apokpas* are of three types, namely 1) *Yek/ Salai Apokpas* (ancestors of one clan 2) *Sagei Apokpas* (ancestors of one sub clan) and 3) *Phungga Apokpas* (ancestors of one of family). Generally, by *Apokpa Khurumba* we mean the worship of the ancestors of the clan. In *Apokpa Khurumba*, on a full moon night of a particular month, the divine souls of the deceased father, grand father and great grand father are invited through the Moon. They are requested by the son of the deceased father to come down from Heaven on the coming new moon night and eat the food offered by the head of the family, who is the son of the deceased father, for their blessing to get child by the childless or to get wealth by the poor or to recover from prolonged illness 35˙The ritual of *Apokpa Khurumba* shows that human soul never dies only the body will perish after death. In *Sanamahism* there is the belief that if death rite is performed properly god Sanamahi leads the soul to the Heaven, the abode of *Tengbanba Mapu Yaibirel sidaba* (Lord of the Universe, the Immortal supreme soul) and that the soul merges with *yaibirel sidaba*. When the souls of the dead ancestors are invoked with proper rituals they come down on the earth to bless their children in the same manner as the waves come up from the surface of the vast water when strong wind blows.

5. IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS FESTIVASL OF SANAMAHISM RELIGION

Important religious festivals of the Meeteis were 1) *Cheiraoba* - New Year's Day Festival celebrated on the 1st day of *Sajibu* (1st Month in the Meetei calendar) 2) *Pakhangba Chenghongba*-offering of uncooked rice to God Pakhangba for peace, prosperity and stability of the kingdom, on the 15th of *Kalen* (second month in the Meetei Calendar 3) *Sanamahi Chenghongba*-offering of uncooked rice to god Sanamahi for timely good rainfall, on the 15th of *Inga* (3rd Month in the Meetei Calendar 4) *Langban Chanou Katpa* -offering of fresh rice to the departed souls of the ancestors of the families in the month of *Langnban* (6th Month in the Meetei Calendar) 5) *Mera Men Tongba* and *Mera Houchongba*- Festivals for peace, prosperity and integrity of the Kingdom, in the month of *Mera* (7th Month in the Meetei Calendar) 6) *Phou oibi,* Iratpa- worship of *Phou oibi,* the goodness of rice, in the harvesting(paddy) month of *Poinu* (9th month in the Meetei calendar) 7) *imomu Iratpa*-worship of Imoinu, the goddess of wealth, on the 12th of *Wakching* (10th Month in the Meetei Calendar 8) *Ukai Kappa*-shooting arrows by the king at a wooden effigy of man to ascertain how the king could defeat the enemies, in the month of *phairen* (11th Month in the Meetei calendar 9) *Ougri chongba* - Rhythmic singing and dancing hand in hand forming a chain by young man and women for longevity and prosperity in the month of *Lamta* (last month in Meetei calendar 10) *Umang Lai Haraoba* - Biggest religious festival, pleasing of *Umanglais* generally in the months of *Kalen* and *Inga* (the 2nd and 3rd months in the Meetei calendar) Detailed accounts of some of the religious festivals are given belows (36).

(i) ***Cheiraoba***: *Cheiraoba* is the New Year's Days Festival of the sanamahists, which is held on the 1st day of *Sajibu*, the first month in the Meetei Calendar. The terms "Cheiraoba "is a compound of two words, namely *Chei* (year) and *laoba* (to declare) "*Chei*" is a corrupted form of the word "Chahei which is an archaic Meetei Language word which means *Chahi* (year). So, the term "*Cheiraoba*" literally means declaration of the commencement of the New Year. The man who declared it held a bamboo stick with bells fixed on the top, which was the symbol of Royal authority on the eve of the Cheiraoba Festival every Meetei dwelling house is thoroughly cleansed, old earthen cooking pots are thrown away and replaced with new ones and metal pots are well cleansed. In this religious festival household deities, namely god Sanamahi and goddess Ima *Leimarel Sidabi* (Immortal Supreme Mother) are specially worshipped by offering obligatory items of flowers (*Kombirei, Lein, Kumsurei/ Kusumlei*) and fruits (*Heiri, Heiyai*). The uncooked rice, the raw vegetables and other materials are offered first to god sanamahi before cooking. Before taking food by the family members, a ritual is performed outside the gate of the house by offering three plates (made of plantain leaves) of cooked rice with other food items ofered to the three *years*, namely 1) last year 2) current year and 3) next year for prosperity and protection from evil spirits. It is believed that the offerings are partaken by three *lamlais* (out door deities), namely 1) *Lammaba Tumaba* 2) *Lamsenba Tusenba* and 3) *Kumsana Kumliklai* and the remaining food is taken by three other deities, namely 1) *Hanu Kokchao* 2) *Hanu Laikham* and 3) *Khunda Hanba.* Besides, little portions of food are also offered at some sacred placed inside and outside the house. After making these offerings the feast is taken by all the members of the family. Cooked food is also exchanged among the neighbouring relatives. One of the main features of Cheiraoba festival is *Ngamu Ushil Thaba.* In this ritual, a particular type of fish known as *Meetei Ngamu* is set free in the pond, each *Ngamu* fish representing each member of the family. It is believed that each fish will bear the sorrows and sufferings death and illness of the member it represents and that the manner of the movements of the fish also shows whether the incoming year will be prosperous or not for the member of the family. In the Royal palace this ushil Thouram is performed by an *Amaiba* (Priest - physician) for the king. One this day palace deities, namely *Pakhangba, Nongshaba, Yumjao Leirembi, Poireiton* and *Lainaotabi* are also specially worshipped.

On this day in the morning before taking the *Cheiraoba* feast some female elders of every village and leikai (part of a big village) called uncooked rice and vegetables from each and every house of their locality and offer it to appease the *sarois* (evil spirits) who always follow the four important and powerful deities, namely *Thangjing,* *Marjing*, *Wangberrel* and *Koubru*, the wardens of four directions i.e. South West, North-East, South-East and North-West. This ritual is called *Saroi Khangba* (to appease the *Sarois* or evil spirits by offering food not to disturb the peaceful life of the members of locality).

The *Cheiraoba* Festival concludes with *Cheirao Ching Kaba* (climbing of hill on Cheiraoba day). On this day in the after noon the Meetei people climb the nearby Hills to bow down to the *lam lais* (outdoor deities) whose holy sites are on the top of Hills for health and longevity. Through the month the Meeties climb the *Thangjing Hill* and *Koubru Hill* and Sundays to bow down to God *Thangjing* and god *Koubru* for their blessing for health and longevity (*Sajibu Cheiraoba*. Festival has been included in the list of general and public holidays published by the Department of Information and public relation, Govt., of Manipur, since 2000).

(ii) ***Imoinu Iratpa***: Goddess Imoinu is worshipped as the goddess of dwelling house in a Meetei family. It is believed that the goddess can transform herself into seven goddesses, namely 1) *Lal Leima* (goddess of wealth and property) 2) *Phou Leima* (goddess of rice) 3) *Ireima* (goddess of water) 4) *Ngareima* (goddess of fishes 5) *Thumleima* (goddess of salt 6) *Sil Leima* (goddess of works and labours) and 7) *Lal Leima* (goddess of war). In Sanamahism, this goddess is regarded as an ideal goddess of an ideal wife in a Meetei family. Her divine seat of worship is just by the western side of the *Funga* (fire place in a dwelling house). The goddess is worshipped as a goddess of wealth and prosperity on the twelveth day of wakching, the tenth month in Meetei calendar in the evening after sunset by offering uncooked rice, row vegetables and a *Sareng* (a kind of fish), which is obligatory before cooking, by offering pine wood candle-light for prosperity of the family. On this day, after sunset dwelling houses, court-yards and gates are decorated with candle lights. Roads, lanes and bye-lanes are also decorated on both sides with rows of bamboo torches. (This religious festival of Sanamahism has been included in the list of general and public holidays published by the Dept. of Information and public relations, Government of Manipur, since 2000 A.D.).

iii) ***Umang Lai Haoraoba***: Umang Lai Haraoba, popularly known as Lai Haraoba is a big religious festival which is unique embodiment of lofty religious philosophy and rich cultural heritage. Every village or part of village is under the protection of one of the *Umang Lais.* Some particular *Umanglais* have thirty to forty holy sites. Hence, at present there are about four hundred holy sites of *Umang Lais. Umang Lai* does not necessarily mean deity in the uninhabited forest or protector of forest. As the villagers are forbidden to fell down the trees grown in the *Laibung* (Holy ground), it is surrounded with many old full grown trees. Hence, the term *"Umanglai"* (*Umang* = shaddy grove, *Lais* = deities) is given to these deities. In the philosophical aspect the *sanamahis* believe that these deities possess the power to illuminate the human mind and protest from evil spirits and the unseen elements. *Umang Lai Haraoba* means the pleasing of *Umang Lai.* Among, the *Umanglais*, Thangjing, Marjing, Wangbarel and Koubru, the four tutelary deities of four particular geographical directions namely South-West, North-East, South-East and North-West and regarded as more important than the other *Umang Lais.* In the *Lai Haraoba* festival in order to please the deities the villagers re-enact the sequence of events highlighting the creation of the Universe by Gods and the evolution for mankind through the medium of songs, dances, hymns, mimes and gestures under the strict direction and guidance of *Amaiba* (priesp) *Amaibi* (Priesters) and *Pena shakpa* (Pena singer) In Sanamahism, there is a strong belief that as and when the gods and goddess are pleased there would be procreativity, prosperity, peace and stability in the village/locality in particular and in the kingdom/land in general. Hence, *Umang Lai Haraoba* (pleasing of *Umang Lai*) had been celebrated by the Meeties since the proto-historical period.

Umang Lais are believed to be the incarnations/descendants of three gods and three goddesses of the Meetei cosmogony. In the *Lai Haraoba* rituals right from *Lai Ikouba* (Invoking the deity to rise up from water) upto *lai Nongkaba* (ascending the heaven) many a number of hymns and prayers associated with the indigenous beliefs and traditional culture of Sanamahism are handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. A few hymns and prayers like *Yumdai Nakseng, Iru Laishan, Anom Athou Akoklon, Nahairon,* among others are usually practised not only in *Laiharaoba* but also in other rituals and religious ceremonies. In the enchanting *Maibi Jagoi* (priestess dance) right from *Lai Hou,* in the *Laibou chongba* there are more than three hundred sixty four dance forms, such as *Hakchang*

Sagatpa, Yumsaral, panthoibi Jagoi, Pamyanlon, Phisa Jagoi, Paton Jagoi, etc. to mention a few of them, the Priestesses learn their dance forms consisting of *Laihou leipek, Khubak, Nongdai, Napa, Fibul, Khutcha, Laiching* etc. under the strict' direction and guidance from experienced *Maibi* teachers over a long period of time. These eternal dance forms associated with sublime religious philosophy through graceful movement of the body, legs and hands may be placed at the status of classical dance. The folk song, of a community is taken to be the epitome of the origin of primal religion, culture and belief of that community. The *pena* singers in the religious folk songs, namely *Yakairol, Haiyute, Anoirol, Wakol, Paosha-Ishei, Ougri, Khencho, Ke Kreke, Loutarol, Phibul Habi, Hijing Hjrao, Lai Nongarol,* etc. have been preserved in the original form till today.

Umang Lai Haraoba is conspicuous by the presence of sporting events, exclusively athletic once. So the two athletic events-*Mukna* (Meetei wrestling) and *Lamjel* (Race) are undoubtedly the part and parcel of the festival. These two athletic events are so momentous that the dexterous *Mukna* tichnique teaches one the art of defeating one's opponent and *Lamjel* the art of escaping from one's superior opponents or to overtake the opponent. In some holy grounds these two athletic events are allowed to go through one day prior to or after the end of the festival and in some others on the last day itself. As for the *Lamjel*, there is usually keen contest not only among the men folk but also among the women folk (both married and unmarried) Again in some holy grounds the Meetei indigenous games like *shook* throw (*shook* a kind of heavy wooden pole of a man's height for removing husks of paddy), *Nung Langba* (*Nung* = stone, *Langba* (throw), *Pou chingnaba* (Tug of war using bamboo) and *Manjong* (Long jump without the usual run up) are being played. Thus, *Lai Haraoba* has been able to preserve the true spirit of indigenous games till date. Generally, *Umang Lai Haraoba/ Lai Haraoba* can be divided into four kinds, namely 1) *Kanglei Haraoba*, 2) *Moirang Haraoba* 3) *Kakching Haraoba* and 4) *Chakpa Haraoba*. This classification is based on trivial local differences. However, these local differences do not deter the basic concepts and philosophy of *Lai Haraoba*. As a matter of fact, *Umang Lai Haraoba* popularly known as *Lai Haraoba*, is instrumental in preserving and safeguarding the religious philosophy and cultural elements of Sanamahism standing tall against the strong influence of changing religious and cultural elements in the modern days. It facilitates us to perceive and discern the immense eternal knowledge of the sacred inter relationship of the lord of the Universe, the Universe, the earth gods and goddesses, human being human body and human soul. Hence, *Umang Lai Haraoba* is the living museum of the religious philosophy of Sanamahism and cultural heritage of the Meeteis.

6. Downfall of Sanamahism

As mentioned above, the indigenous religion of the Meeteis known as Sanamahism was at its zenith during the reign of King Khagemba (1597-1652). This condition continued without any remarkable change up to the reign of Paikhomba (1666-1697). Charairongba who ascended the throne in 1697 A.D. was the first king initiated into Hinduism, and he adopted the Sanskrit name Pitambar Singh. Most strikingly there was no evidence whatsoever of King Charairongba even attempting to impose his Hindu faith on his subjects. Although he was an acclaimed Hindu king of this land he was definitely not a religious fanatic and he did not pursue any such policy or measure which might dent the Sanamahism pursued by his subject. The liberal king Charairongba alias Pitambar Singh used to allow unrestricted and free worship of all the traditional deities and unhindered practice of all the associated religious rituals.

After the death of Charairongba, Garibniwaja (Pamheiba) ascended the throne. In 1717 he was initiated into Hinduism by Gopal Das. After the departure of Gopal Das from this Kingdom, King Garibniwaja, on the advice of Shanta Das, was converted to Ramandi (Ramanandi) Hinduism, Shanti Das was a religious preceptor of strong will, who came to this kingdom to propagate Ramandi Hinduism from Sylhet with his two followers, Bhagaban Das and Narayan Das.(37) When Shanta Das advised King Garibniwaja to initiate into Ramandi Hinduism the king consulted his nobles and Maichou (Pandits) who opposed the conversion on the ground that people of this kingdom would be drowned in the flood of the influx of alien language, customs and beliefs. But the king was in favour of Shanta Das. In full view of his nobles and subjects, while the Brahmin was performing the conversion ritual the king folded his hands and took a religious vow declaring that he would not worship any other deity other than Shree Ramachandra.(38) After his conversion to Ramandi Hinduism, he used even violent means for the imposition of the new religion on his subjects. Most of his subjects were forced to abandon their indigenous religion i.e. Sanamahism and convert to Ramandi Hinduism by chanting the holy name of god Rama in lieu of chanting the holy name of god Sanamahi. In order to abolish Sanamahism King Garibaniwaja took up a number of destructive actions.

7. DESTRUCTION OF ABODES AND IDOLS OF UMANG LAIS

The worship of *Umang Lais* was an essential part of Sanamahism. In Sanamahism these deities were worshipped as protectors and guardians of one village or a part of a village or four important directions. Within a few years of conversion to Ramandi Hinduism King Garibaniwaja was completely under the whim of Shanta Das. On the advice and instigation of his preceptor he destroyed all the temples and holy sites of *Umang lais* and other deities. In 1723 A.D. in the month of September/October, he destroyed all the temples of *Umang Lais.* From the full moon day of the month of *Hiyangei*, the ritual service to the worship of four deities, namely god *Nongshaba*, goddess *Yumthei Lai*, goddess *Panthoibi* and God *Sorarel* was duly handed over to the Brahmin priests(39). In 1726 in the month of *Ingel* (July/August) all the *konmai* (*Konmai* = mask of *Umang lais* made of brass) were collected and buried at *Mongba hanba Umang* where the temple of Hindu god Hanuman was constructed.(40) In the same year an Monday the 20th of *Ingel* (July/August) the King destroyed the idols of seven deities, namely god *Laiying thou*, goddess *panthoibi*, god *Laiwahaiba*, two idols of *Lammabi* god *Sorarel* and goddess *Huidonpokpi*,(41) Shanta Das identified goddess Hiyangthang Lairembi as the Hindu goddess *Kamakhya*(42). One of the most heart rending religious crimes committed by king Garibniwaja , which could not be forgotten by the followers of Sanamahism was the destruction of the idol of god Sanamahi which was moulded by king Khagemba in the human form out of bell - metal.(43) In the history of this kingdom this unfortunate event is called '*Sanamahi kollu yeikhaiba* (*Kollu* = bell-metal image, *yeikhaiba* = Destruction). Shanta Das also told the people not to sing Meetei songs and ballads of Meetei deities. Shree Atombapu Sharma, an eminent Manipuri Brahmin Sanskrit scholar in his '*Pakhangba*' remarks- "Guru Shanta Das said- The songs of the Meeteis should not be sung, if any body listens to these songs attentively and sheds tears for them, in case of death in the day time he turns into a crow and in case of death in the night time he turns into an owl. Then it flies into the *Makoi Nungol Ching* (a hill on the way to the land of death) and falls into the Hell. One should not listen to the legends of god Nongpok ningthou and goddess Panthoibi and the song of Khamba and Thoibi."(44)

II. Identification of Gotras with *Yeks/ Salais*: It is already mentioned that the Meeteis are basically composed of seven *Yeks/ Salais* (clans). *Apokpa Khurumba* (Ancestor Worship) is an essential part of Sanamahism, In one of the three kinds of *Apokpa Khurumba* the progenitors of the *Yek/ Salai* are worshipped for their divine blessings by all the *Sageis* (Sub-clans) belonging to the same *Yek/ Salai* (clan). King Garibniwaja the advice of his Guru Shanta Das introduced the Hindu Gotra, system and identified them with the seven *Yeks/ Salais* of the Meeteis, '*Sanamahi Laikan*', an old text written in Meetei scripts records the introduction of *gotras* and their identification with the *Yeks/ Salais* in the Meetei society)(45):

Yek/ Salai	*Gotra*
1. Ningthouja (Mangang)	Shandilya
2. Luwang	Kashyap
3. Khuman	Madhugalya
4. Angom	Kaushika
5. Moirang	Aiteriya
6. Khanganba	Gautam
7. Sarang Leisang	Bhardwaja

III. **Introduction of Caste system**: After conversion to Hinduism all the Meeteis including the dynasty of the king were declared as Kshetriyas. Thus Hindunised Meetei society became a single caste and the Meetei Brahmins belonged to Brahmin caste. The dynasty of the Meetei Kings was identified with Surya Vamsa of Shree Ramachandra of *Ramayana*. Thus, during the reign of king Garibniwaja, the Meetei society was transformed into the Hindu society.(46)

IV. Burning of Puyas: *Puyas* are archaic and old texts written in Meetei scripts on a number of subjects, namely creation of the heaven and the earth, genealogy of the kings and seven *yeks/ Salais*, tales of gods and goddesses, rites and rituals, hymns of indigenous religion, giving the names of different places, accounts of hills etc. The Puyas are regarded as sacred books by the Meeteis. On the advice and instigation of Shanta Das, King Garibniwaja took up action for the destruction of the Puyas by burning. It was strongly objected to by the people under the leadership of *Chingu Maichou Louremba Khongnangthaba* and *Maichou Moirang Lalhanba*. The king declared that those who concealed and prayed with them would be given befitting punishment. And by the order of the king, *puya* were collected and piled up like a small hillock in front of *Kangla Uttra*. In the meantime *Maichau* (priest scholar-physician) Khongnangthaba came hurriedly to meet the king of Kangla and persuaded him not to indulge in such sinister action. He told the king that burning of books had never happened during the reign of his forefathers, the king is the father and mother of his subjects, burning of books is a sinful action and that people would be in deep trouble. King Garibaniwaja retorted that he had already given his words to Guru Shanta Das to carry out the burning of the books. Then Chingu Khongnangthaba told the king that he (king) would be responsible for any thing good or evil and went away. In 1732 A.D. in the month of *Mera* (Oct/Nov) 120 *Puyas* (old texts) on various subjects were burnt to ashes. Shanta Das announced that the Meeteis should cremate the dead bodies just like the burning of the *puyas*. The titles of the Puyas are given below:–

1) Sanamahi Naoyom
2) Thirel Sakok
3) Sanamahi Laihui
4) Thirel Singkap
5) Sanamahi Thirel
6) Khunnung Singkap
7) Sanamahi Leikhan Nongkhan
8) Thirel Meiramliba
9) Sanamahi Lamhing
10) Thirel Layat
11) Pakhangba Naoyom
12) Thirel Laicham
13) Pakhangba Thirel
14) Thirel Chappi
15) Pakhangba Yangbi
16) Thirel Thipokpi
17) Pakhangba Laihui
18) Thirel Krathong

19) Taoroinai Yangbi
20) Leisangkhong Thirel
21) Taoroinai Picha
22) Yumbi Thirel
23) Leithak Leikharol
24) Nongmaijing Thirel
25) Leikha Nongkharol
26) Heipok Thirel
27) Leichinlon Yumbi
28) Heipok Thirel
29) Nonglon Yumbi
30) Langol Thirel
31) Nonglon Laicham
32) Koubru Laikhei
33) Nonglon Krathong
34) Thangjing Laikhei
35) Nongdon Langpum
36) Chingkhei Sekning
37) Nonglon Leichinlon
38) Wangbarel Sekning
39) Leirol Leichinlon
40) Lalampung Lankhei
41) Leirol Yumnchetpa
42) Chinga Lankhei
43) Leichinlon Naoyom
44) Nunglon Lambuba
45) Leipakta Houba Leichinlon
46) Nunglon Yumbi
47) Pital Langpum
48) Nunglon Laicham
49) Nonglon Yangbi
50) Maraklon
51) Sakok Laicham
52) Hiyailon
53) Khoi Mahou
54) Hiri Langsunglen
55) Mahou Langpum
56) Chongkhulen
57) Mahou Changdrakhel
58) Khambiron
59) Mahou Sekning
59) Laiyat Thengouron
60) Mahou Phaphi Sakok
61) Charaplon
62) Mahou Langpumkhel
63) Apoklon
64) Tanthong Mahou
65) Apok Langpumlon
66) Lamthong Mahou
67) Nongmaichingchinggoirol
68) Yumbi Mahou
69) Heipok Chinggoirol
70) Leihou Mahou
71) Chingthang Chinggoirol
72) Nongpai Mahou
73) Koubru Chinggoirol
74) Thengkhen Mahou
75) Loijing Chinggoirol
76) Leichai Mahou
77) Konjeng Kokphairol
78) Thenka Mahou
79) Chongkhu Lambi
80) Nonglon Mahou
81) Khunung Punggoirol
82) Leirol Mahou
83) Khabi Thelenlon
84) Chakparol Mahou
85) Subika
86) Hiri Langsung Mahou
87) Jatit
88) Kithum Mahou
89) Khunthok Yangbi
90) Chakparol Thenkaba
91) Chingsatlen
92) Konna Nungbung Koiba
93) Mahou Yangbi

94) Nongdon Hiri
95) Ulon
96) Khunung Sampum
97) Walon
98) Manatlon
98) Pabot Khangchinglon
99) Chanatlon
100) Sangbum Langpumlon
101) Kri Langsunglon
102) Thayang Hibuklon
103) Waba Langkhalon
104) Singkhal Langkhallon
105) Kongkha Laichoulon
106) Singtabung
107) Selloi Ningchitlon
108) Sana Sekning
109) Paphal Ukhoulon
110) Poireiton Khunthokpa
111) Numit Khenchanglon
112) Poireiton Ningchit
113) Thawanmichak Khenchanglon
114) Khammoi Yammoi Sekning
115) Kha Khenchanglon
116) Nongsaba Khunthok
117) Taoma Hiyang Khollona
118) Nungbi Nungtharol

In addition to the above mentioned 118 *puyas*, a number of other books of rites, rituals and religious hymns of the indigenous religion of the Meetei were also burnt down. According to some scholars, in that unfortunate event known as "*Puya Meithaba*" seven hundred copies of *Puyas* were burnt(47).

V. Identification of Meetei Festivals with Hindu Festivals: During the reign of King Garibaniwaja a number of indigenous Meetei festivals were identified with Hindu festivals. "*Sanamahi Laikan*" the archaic text gives us the names of the Meetei festivals which had been identified with Hindu festivals -(i) The annual boat race festival known as *Heikru Hidongba* which traditionally held in the month of *Hiyangei* (October/November) was renamed "*Jala Jatra* (ii) *Ayang Yairol Iruppa*, the festival of mass holy dip in the Lilong Sahoupat in the month of *Wakching* (January) was also renamed "*Snan*" (iii) The festival of "*Waira-Tenkap*" in the month of *Phairel* (February) was substituted by "*Kritan of god Rama*" (iv) *Kongba Leithong Phatpa* in the month of *Sajibu* (March/April) was identified with "*Vishnu Sankranti*" (v) The festival of "*Ahongkhong Ching*" in the month of *Ingel* (June/July) was substituted by "*Dal Jatra*" (vi) The offering of fresh rice to the departed souls of ancestors in the month of *Langban* (Sept/Oct) known as "*Tara Chanou Katpa*" was renamed "*Pritilok Iratpa* (vii) The worship of goddess *Nunggoibi* in the month of *Mera* (Oct/Nov) and substituted by *Dasanan Kwaktanba*"/"*Desserah*" and (viii) the festival of testing newly harvested rice known as "*Chanou Huichintu*" was replaced by "Goverdhana Puja"(48).

VI. Renaming of the Kingdom: After conversion to Ramandi Hinduism the old Kingdom of the Meeteis was renamed into Manipur and identified with the Manipur of the Mahabharata, which was ruled by Babrubahana, son of Arjuna by his Manipuri wife Princess Chitranggada. As regards the renaming of the kingdom "*Sanamahi Laikan*" the old text records(49).

"*Surung Mayai Koirel ahobasung malem leirol phaoye. Asum haina paokhumba ashibu konung araiba wangam achambabu natte leibak ashigi maming thongdi manipur leimayon haina ming thonse. Maram karam kouriklabano pao hanglabadi lakhan nong Arjun mapari langcheng mathoklakpana panthou laikanwagi mirai amana toungomdaba ponglai amana chatngamdaba patal leirol changna ananta tokjen lising panbadagee maniyairang chanbu puthokluba adune paokhumse*" -

A free translation of this quotation is - "There is a tunnel through the layers of the earth below. The palace is not an ordinary and simple one. Let us give the name *"Manipur"* to this land. If the reason is asked the answer should be given in such a way that in olden days youthful Babrubahana, in order to save the life of his father Arjuna entered through the layers of the earth and brought out the bright diamond from the head of one thousand headed Ananta." Thus, on the advice of Shanta Das the old Kingdom of the Meeteis was renamed into Manipur and the king was known as Manipureswar.

During the reign of Manipureswar Garibniwaja religious dissent was treated with the same ruthless severity as was meted out to political opponents and wholesale banishment and execution drove the people into the acceptance of the tenets of Hinduism 50. Thus with the conversion of King Garibniwaja to Ramandi Hinduism there came in the downfall of Sanamahism and the process of Sankritisation/Hindunisation continued. During the reign of king Bhagyachandra (1763-1798) the Meetei Hindus diverted from Ramandi Hinduism to Hindu Gouriya Vaisnavism. This Religion was the religion of the Meetei for about 180 years without any criticism from the Meetei. During this period almost all the gods and goddesses of indigenous Sanamahi Religion of the Meeteis were identified with those of Hindu Religion and almost all the rivers and some of the hills were given Hindu names in place of the original ones.(51)

7. REVIVALIST MOVEMENT OF SANAMAHISM

The excessive sanskritisation process of Hindu Religion in the Meetei society hurt the minds of some of the Meeteis who wanted to preserve their indigenous religious and cultural identity. In 1930 during the reign of king Churachand (1891-1941), the religious and cultural revivalist movement of the Meeteis started in the Meetei village in Cachar, Assam, The founding father of the movement was Naorem Phulo popularly known as Laininghal Naoriya. He was born in 1888 on Monday the 22nd day of *Thawan* (August/Sept) at Jhariban Laishram Khul Mamang Leikai, Cachar. The Meeteis in Cachar dressed like the Bengalis and worshipped the Hindu gods and goddesses like the Bengalis. His Bengali friends asked him: Don't you have your own language? Don't your have your own scripts? Don't you have your gods and goddesses? These questions made him think seriously over the language, scripts, cultures and indigenous religion of the Meeteis. After his resignation from government, services he formed a religious organisation known as "*Apokpa Marup*" in 1930 for the revival of the indigenous religion of the Meeteis. He wrote about 19 books, namely 1) *Eigi wareng* (a critical account of the evils of Hinduism in the Meetei society) 2) *Meetei Houpham Wari* (an account of the origin of the Meeteis) 3) *Laining thou Laipao* (hymns of the Almighty God) 4) *Ningthourel Pamheiba* (an account of the reign of king Garibniwaja) 5) *Singtha Cheitharol* (a book of rites and rituals) 6) *Thayin Nongyin* (a book of verses on Meetei religious philosophy 7) *Ahal yathang* (a discourse on indigenous religion of the Meeteis, 8) *Hounabung amasung Lannabung* (a book of the holy sites in Manipur 9) *Sakok Thirel* (divine theory of creation of the Universe) etc. *Apokpa Marup* worked hard for the revival of the indigenous organisation asked the Meeteis in Cachhar to renounce Hinduism. On seeing the activities of Naoriya Phulo the orthodox Meetei Hindus of Cachhar ostracized him from the society as unclean. He led the religious revivalist Movement for about one decade and died on June 30, 1941(51).

The news of the movement of the revival of the traditional religion of the Meeteis reached Manipur valley in 1934. Takhellambam Bokul, popularly known as Sanamahi Bokul got the news from a friend of his locality. As soon as he got the news, the anxiety of meeting Naoriya Phulo grew in his mind. So, in 1934 on the day of *Krishna Janma* he along with Pukhrambam Surchand and Pukhrambam Ibomcha left Manipur for Cachar. In Cachar,they stayed in the house of one Ashem Tombi, a neighbour of Lainingthou Naoriya. They listened to the talks of *Laininghal* on the importance of the revival of the traditional religion of the Meeteis. Laininghal Naoriya's talk on the Meetei culture and religion was so convincing that they renounced Hinduism then and there. After about one year and nine months they came back to Manipur. For the revival of Sanamahism they formed one organising committee consisting of 7(seven) members. On 10th May, 1942 for the first time, Imphal was bombed during the World-War-ll. Most of the people of Imphal area left home and took shelter at distant villages. After about two years in the middle of 1944 they came back. As soon as all the people led a normal life on 14th May, 1945 on the third day of *Kalen* (2nd month in the Meetei calendar) a religious organisation known as "*Meetei Marup, Manipur State*" was formed.(53) As regards the relation between the "*Apokpa Marup*" of Cachar and "*Meetei Marup*" Sanamahi Bokul said, " In Cachar Laininghal Naoriya formed "*Apokpa Marup*" and organised-a strong movement for the revival of Meetei nationality, Meetei religion and Meetei culture— "*Meetei Marup*" as a branch of "*Apokpa Marup*" was born on 14th May, 1945 in Meetei Leipak."(54)

The members of the "Meetei Marup" seriously criticized the Meetei Hindus but not Hinduism itself. They asked the Meetei Hindus to renounce Hinduism and work hard for the revival of Sanamahism. However, this revivalist movement was not a smooth one. A number of debates were organised in which hot arguments took place between Meetei Hindu scholars and Sanamahi protagonists. Sanamahi school was represented by Takhellambam Bokul. In order to nip the revivalist movement in the bud, in 1947 the *Brahmasabha*, the highest authority of Hindu religious affairs took up a strong action against the leaders of the revivalist movements. On October, 1947 the *Brahmasabha* issued an order to ostracize thirty eight Sanamahi leaders including Takhellambam Bokul, Pukhrambam Surchand and Pukhrambam Ibomcha on the ground that they were the members of the Meetei Marup or devotees of Sanamahi *Dharma* and that they had renounced Gouriya Vaishnavism without any respect to the Vedas and Brahmins and that they had their own religious sectmark on their forehead. The order further asked every Meetei Hindu Gouriya Vaishnavite not to mix up with them in religious function and not to dine with them. A copy of the order was sent to the then Chief Minister of Manipur to be published for public information.(55) Besides the thirty eight Sanamahists, a number of other Sanamahists were also excommunicated, by the Meetei Hindus and they were not invited in the religious ceremonies. In other words, the Meetei Sanamahists were looked down upon as untouchables. Thus the revivalist movement continued, However, since 1948, the movement began to spread in different parts of Manipur valley. The *Mangba-sengba* (Unclean-clean) controversy of the Brahmasabha also indirectly helped the revivalist movement. Today, in almost all the villages of Manipur valley there are organisations and associations for the revival of Sanamahism(56).

8. NATURE OF SANAMAHI REVIVALIST MOVEMENT

Sanamahism is not against Hinduism or any other human religion. The preachers of Sanamahism work for the revival of this religion among the people of the Meetei community only. They never ask the people of other communities to renounce Hinduism or any religion they had adopted. They are neither anti-Brahmin nor anti Hindu. They are only afraid of losing their millennia-old religious and cultural identity. They want to safeguard their community from the cultural invasion through religion. They preach the people that the Meeteis had a very systematic and universal religion known as Sanamahism before the advent of Hinduism and that it is the obligation of every Meetei to revive and nourish it. Every follower of Sanamahism respects all the religions in the world.(56)

The aims and objects of the revivalist movement of Sanamahism may be summed up as follows(57).

1. to renounce Hinduism by the Meetei Hindus
4. to discard all the concocted theories of sanskritisation invented by the preachers of Hinduism,
3. to take up necessary measures for the protection, preservation and promotion of indigenous religion, culture, scripts and language.
4. to absorb new elements and values to Sanamahism without undergoing changes in the basic elements and values of

Sanamahism and Meetei culture in such a way as the absorption of nutrients from the soil by the plants for their growth.

5. to strengthen the unity between the hill and plain people and to live together as sons and daughters of the same mother.
6. to strengthen the bonds of religious integrity and cultural unity among the Meeteis who are living inside and outside the boundary of Manipur State.
7. to take up research work on the history of Manipur.
8. to convince the world that a community of people known as the Meeteis existed with their distinct religious and cultural identity in South-East Asia for not less than two millennia.

8. CYCLICAL RITES IN SANAMAHISM

1. **Birth Rite:** In Sanamahism it is believed that the soul of a human being comes down from *Yaibirel Sidaba* (Immortal Supreme Soul), whose abode is in the heaven, through certain heavenly bodies, namely 1) *Numit* (sun) 2) *Tha* (Moon) 3) *Sajik* (morning star) 4) *Thaba* (evening star) 5) *Okpuroi* (a certain star) and 6) *Taohuireng* (a certain star) and enters the body of the father. Then the soul riding on the *phambi* (semen) of the father enters the womb of the mother. Then after ten months the child comes out on the earth with the holy names *Hayi* (Supreme Father) and *Haya* (Supreme Mother) holding into its right and left fists. Whenever a child is borne, a *naoshubi Maibi* (mid wife priestess) is called for attending to the mother and the child. As soon as the child is borne, the *Maibi* cuts the umbilical cord with the bamboo knife and the placenta is put in a small earthen pot which is buried in the right side of the dwelling house (veranda) in the case of male child and in the left side in the case of female child. Then the child is bathed by the *Maibi* and then its father breathed out the holy name of *Yaibirel Sidaba* (Immortal supreme soul) into the right ear of the new borne male child and into the left ear of the new born female child. The mother is not allowed to mix up with the members of the family and her food is also prepared separately in separate utensils for a few days as she is literally considered unclean. Then on the sixth day of the child's birth *Ipan* (*Yupan*) *Thaba* rite is performed in the morning. All the earthen cooking pots used by her and .straw mattress she used to sleep on

are thrown out of gate. Both the mother and the child are readily bathed and then they are sanctified by the Maibi (midwife- priestess) by sprinkling holy water with *Tairen* (a kind of tree) leaves and *pungphai* (a kind of grass). On that day the dwelling house along with those of their *Sagei* (sub-clan) are also cleaned and sanctified. A bamboo basket full of rice in the husk along with a wreath of dry fish, two *Meetei Thum Mapaks* (discs of local salt), two tubers of ginger are offered to the god at the eastern veranda. Uncooked rice, *Heibimana* leaves of a kind of tree), *Yendem* (a kind of alkaloid edible plant) dry *Meetei Ngamu* (a kind of local fish), salt and chilli are mixed up together and offered to goddess Imoinu at the western side of *Funga* (fire place) Then the Maibi mimics to feed the child with the mixed food, The *Maibi* puts the child on a *Yangkok* (a round-shaped item for winnowing rice) and rocks it repeatedly'above the *Funga* (place) and asks the mother whether she wants the child or gold or silver. The mother readily gives a coin to the *Maibi* indicating that her child is more precious than gold or silver.

In the evening members of the child's maternal family come along with their relatives and friends. With them they bring food items for the mother and clothing and ornaments for the child. In this *Ipan* (*Yupan*) *Thaba*, birth rite *Nongdamba Lai* (God of Fate/Destiny) and *Pitai Khomdaibi/ Pithrai Khongdraibi* (goddess under whose watchful eyes the child would be upto the age of 3 years) are exclusively worshipped for the prosperity and longevity of the child. The maternal uncle of the child shoots four arrows in four direction, namely South-west, North-East, South-East and North West representing the four arrows of four guardian deities of the four directions, namely Thangjing, Marjing, Wangbarel and Koubru to drive out evil spirits for health and longevity of the child, And an arrow representing that of god *Sorarel* (protector of the direction of heaven) and that of god *Thongarel*.(protector of the direction of hell) is kept attached to the front wall of the child's bedroom to protect (birth rite God *Tengbanba Mapu* (her of the Universe) God *Sanamahi*, God *Pakhangba* and Goddess *Leimarel Sidabi* (Immortal supreme Mother) being enthroned on a *Phambal* (Throne) are worshipped by a priest by chanting hymns for their divine blessings. The mother is forbidden to cook for the family and to share the same bed with her husband for at least forty days.(58)

2. Marriage Rite: In the engaged marriage ceremony of Sanamahism there are five stages, namely 1) *Nupi Haiba* (request for the would be brides hand 2) *Yathang Thaba* (announcement of the acceptance of the forth coming marriage to groom's family) 3) *Waroipot Puba* (final agreement to the marriage proposal by both the families) 4) *Heijing - Pot Puba* (offering of fruits to the bride's parents which is the most significant part of all the four stages. The husband and sons of the woman whose marriage ceremony is devoid of *Heijing - pot Puba* are debarred from direct participation is some particular rites such as *Sagei Apokpa Khurumba* (ancestor worship of the sub-clan to which the family belongs) and *Lai Chaklong Katpa* of the *Sagei* (pleasing of the *Umanglai of the Sagei*). They are also (forbidden to succeed the hereditary post of Sagei piba (Sagei chief). In this ritual the groom's parents bring fruits, sweetmeats and other articles not only for the bride's family friends and relatives but also for 1) the *Umanglai* of the locality 2) *Apok Asha* (ancestors of the bride's family 3) god Sanamahi and 4) goddess *Ima Leimarel sidabi.* This intricate ritual indicates that the marriage is duly sanctioned not only by the bride's parents but also by the deities themselves.

v) The actual marriage ceremony is performed at the residence of the bride. On the day of the marriage a ritual is also performed by an Amaiba (priest) at the groom's residence invoking deities for their divine blessings. After bowing down to god Sanamahi and goddess Leimarel Sidabi and his parents the groom sets out for the bride's residence. Married women are exclusively engaged to carry the following articles to the bride's residence (i) One *chengluk Nungsang* (a bamboo basket with rounded and elevated cover containing rice, two discs of *Meetei Thum* (local salt discs), cotton, tobacco leaves and ginger for goddess Imoinu (goddess of dwelling house whose abode is just at the western side of Funga fire place)) 2) One *Phiruk* (basket) containing fruits and sweet-meats for *Apok Asha* (bride's family ancestors) 3) Another *Phiruk* for *Lamlai* (local *umanglai*) 4) One pot containing two Meetei Ngamus (a kind of local fish) 5) one container for the cloth and ornaments of the bride are placed 6) Another container of *Athenpot* (Vegetable gifts for the bride's family).

In the marriage ceremony three gods, viz Tengbanba Mapu, Sanamahi and Pakhangba and goddess Leimarel Sidabi being enthroned on a *phambal* (throne) are worshipped by a priest by chanting hymns for their divine blessings. In this ceremony the right hands of the bride and the groom are tide together with a garland by the bride's mother, while the groom and the bride are sitting with *Kujapot* (an earthen dish containing gift items offered by the bride to the groom for getting his love and affection) at the courtyard where the ceremony is being solemnised, as a part of ritual two *Meetei Ngamus* (a kind of local fish) are set free in the adjoining pond so that they may take away the sorrows and sufferings of the couple along with them. The couple entered the bride's house and bow down to god Sanamahi, goddess Ima Leimarel Sidabi and goddess Imoinu for the divine blessings. The bride's parents also leave for the groom's residence being led by Women carrying on their heads (i) One *Chengphu* (a big earthen pot full of rice) (ii) One *Phiruk* containing fruits for *Apok Asha* (groom's family ancestors (iii) Another Phiruk for the *lamlai* of the groom's locality (iv) Two *phiruks* of fruits - one for god Sanamahi and another for goddess *Leimarel sidabi*. As soon as the marriage party reach the groom's gate the bride is warmly received with two big wooden torches and the edge of the grooms courtyard she is accorded a warm welcome by her mother in law. The bride's maternal uncle checks the bed of the newly married couple and puts a finishing touch. The bride bows down before god Sanamahi and goddess *leimarel sidabi* and to their bed room.(59)

3. Death Rite : In the traditional religious belief of Sanamahism death means the separation of the soul from the body. The believe that the soul of the living man is just like a *pombi* (a bird in a cage) and the body corresponds to a *Lang* (a cage). An analogy has been rightly drawn between the bird flying out of the *lang* (cage) and the so called "Death" soul never dies only the body perishes.

It is a well known fact that the Meetei used to bury dead bodies before the advent of Hinduism. During the reign of King Garibaniwaja (1709-1748) Under the influence of Hinduism and subsequent conversion to Hinduism the Meeteis began to cremate the dead bodies in 1724.(60) Even today in the funeral rite the dead body is put in a coffin before being cremated which inevitably supports the contention that the burial of the dead body was in vogue in the pre-Hinduism era. However, the followers Sanamahi also cremate their dead bodies even though they renounced Hinduism (They bury only the dead body of infant below the age of three.) It was customary for the bereaved family to throw all the earthen cooking pots out of the gate before the return of the members of the said family, who take part in the funeral from the funeral place and replace them with new ones, as for the metal pots they are thoroughly cleansed, the floor of the house is also cleaned with water and wiper but not with cow dung. The house is sanctified by sprinkling water with *Tairel* (a kind of local tree) leaves and *Pungphai* (a kind of grass). The news of the dead is given to all the families of the same *sagei* (sub-clan). These families also perform the ritual of cleansing and sanitization.

On the fifth day "*Leihul Thourarri*" is performed by offering flowers to the soul of the dead with hymns by a priest at the cremation site. On the 10th day of dwelling house of the bereaved family is cleaned and sanctified by sprinkling holy water. On the 11th day "*Lanna Thourarn* (*Mathou Yanggeenba*) (Rite to attain salvation) is performed by a priest. Three gods, namely Tengbanba Mapu, Sanamahi and Pakhangba and goddess Ima Leimarel Sidabi being enthroned on a *Phambal* (throne) are worshipped by a priest by chanting hymns for their divine blessings. This is associated with the singing of religious songs.

The final stage of the death ritual is performed on the completion of one year from the day of death. It is called *phiroi* in which a grand feast is offered to the four cosmogony deities and all the relatives and friends par take it. In the traditional religion of the Meeteis known as Sanamahi religion/Sanamahism it is believe that if all the rituals stipulated above are performed properly god Sanamahi forgives the deceased from all sins committed by him and leads his soul straight to heaven, the abode of Tengbanba Mapu Yajbirel Sidaba (Immortal supreme soul) and the soul merges with him.(61)

9. BASIC MORAL PRINCIPLES OF SANAMAHISM

The basic moral principles of Sanamahism are included in a number of scriptures known as *puyas* (old texts). These moral and religious principles were propagated by the elders and passed on to the followers of Sanamahism, by the religious story tellers and the priests at the religious ceremonies and festivals.

Some of the basic religious and moral principles of Sanamahism are given below(62).

Moral principles for human beings:

(i) You should regard your parents as visible deities.
(ii) You should not keep a jealous eye on the property of others.
(iii) Your mind should be as soft as flowers for the poor and helpless and as strong as lions against those who behave like wild beasts.
(iv) You should not be tempted by passions like anger, pride, greed and jealousy.
(v) You should respect the words and views of your elders.
(vi) You should forgive the faults of others.
(vii) You should keep your words.
(viii) You should struggle hard for fame and achievement.
(ix) You should regard the aged as your parents.
(x) You should earn your livelihood by honest means.
(xi) You should be easily satisfied with what you get.
(xii) You should not eat forbidden things.
(xiii) Your mind and heart should be pure and truthful.
(xiv) You should be kind and helpful to the poor and the weak.
(xv) You should be kind to your inferiors.
(xvi) You should keep yourself cool at the provocation of others.
(xvii) You should follow the path of life with humility and wisdom.
(xviii) Both your body and mind should be clean.
(xix) You should treat your children and the children of others equally.
(xx) You should eat simple and ordinary food and lead a simple life.
(xxi) You should use ordinary and clean clothes.
(xxii) You should regard human body as the temple of divine spirits.

Moral principles for the husbands:

1. You should regard a lonely woman on the way as your mother.
2. You should treat your wife as the queen of your dwelling house.

3. You should not keep your eyes on the wives of others with sexual jealousy.
4. You should not violate the chastity of young girls.
5. You should not abuse, beat and kick and send back home your wife in tears.
6. You should not be easily charmed by the external beauty of women.
7. You should not stay away from the path of manhood.
8. You should not have illicit relation with other women.
9. You should not act against the desire and wish of your honest and devoted wife.

Moral principles for the wives

1. You should regard your husband as a divine being.
2. You should not expose your body to lure other men.
3. You should be well behaved, sincere and faithful to your husband.
4. You should not have illicit relation with other man.
5. You should not be excited at the sight of other men
6. You should not challenge and ignore the words of your husband.
7. You should not be in the habit of disclosing the secret of your family to your neighbours.
8. You should look after your in-laws properly.
9. You should be prudent and consume food and spend money with proper planning for the future.
10. You should be humble about the future.

Daily prayer-routine of a Sanamahist

1. In the morning you should pray to god *Sanamahi* and goddess *Ima Leimare Sidabi* and bow down to goddess mother earth by touching the ground with your fingers and raising them to your forehead before you get down from your bed and after teaching the front verandah you should offer prayers to *Mangang Sidaba* (name of sun-god in the morning).

2. At noon when the sun is up overhead you should leave your work for some time and should offer prayers to *Luwang sidaba* (name of the god at noon).
3. In the evening when the crimson rays of the setting sun are on the western in the sky you should offer prayers to *Khuman sidaba* (name of the god who govern in the evening time).
4. At night you should pray to god Sanamahi and goddess Ima Leimarel sidabi and be ready to sleep.
5. At sunrise and also at sunset generally one of the female members of the family should worship all the household deities with pine wood candle lights for divine blessings.

CONCLUSION

The indigenous religion of the Meeteis Known as Sanamahi Religion (Sanamahism) is obviously an advance over the crude animism of the primitive days. The early Meeteis were not unmindful of the philosophical aspects of the origin and nature of the universe. On the advice of *Tengbanba Mapu yaibirel sidaba* (Lord of the Universe, the Immortal supreme soul). God Sanamahi created the universe along with its living and non living beings. Man was ultimately created by God Sanamahi in the image of his father, Tengbanba Mapu. And man, a unique and perfect form of beings, has a mortal body and an immortal soul. Thus, in Sanamahism, there is a universal interrelationship of the inseparable elements of the Lord of the Universe, the heaven, the earth, living and non living beings, human body and human soul. The whole universe is the manifestation of all the powers that emanate from the lord of the universe who is the Immortal supreme progenitor of all living and non living beings in the universe. God Sanamahi is *Tengbanba Mapu* (Lord of Universe) Himself appearing for the purpose of creation of the Universe, He is the way to Tengbanba Mapu. In the Sanamahism professed by the Meeteis there is higher order of religious faith. This could be well authenticated from the exclusive nature of the various rites and rituals performed in the life cycle rituals and calendrical religious festivals in the Meetei society. To acquaint with the metaphysical, social and religious concepts of Sanamahism of the Meetei's one should necessarily study the religious traditions of the Meeteis before the advent of Hinduism. Inspite of the fact that the conversion of Hinduism has imposed upon the Meeteis burden some restrictions of caste, rituals and the question of *Mangba-sengba* (clean and unclean/touchable and untouchable) the younger generation of the Meeteis have been able to protect, preserve and promote the religious values, beliefs, cultural heritage and rich philosophy embedded in sanamahism. There are, 2,22,348 (two lakhs twenty two thousands and three hundred forty eight) followers of Sanamahi religion in the state of Manipur as per 2001 census, and today, the Meetei Sanamahists believe that they would be able to convince the world that a community of people known as the Meeteis have existed with their distinct religious and cultural identify in South-East Asia for not less than two millennia.

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Astrology and Astronomy—An Unbroken Tradition of Manipuri Culture

The importance of the Manipuri system of astrology and astronomy has been proved beyond doubt not only by its relevance to the game of Polo, Ras Lila dance, martial arts, indigenous sports, etc. but also by the suffix of the word sign in the name of the male members among the Meiteis. The suffix "Singh" (Leo/Lion) shows that the sign of Singh (Lion) is the *Janma rāshi* of Manipur in astrological interpretation. The game of, Polo and the indoor game of *Kang* has the astronomical implication according to the interpretation of Pandit Atombapu Sharma. *Kangdrum* or ball in the game of Polo and traditional hockey symbolises the round shape of the earth. The manner of striking the bamboo ball by a bamboo or cane stick is nothing but the imitation of the sun's movement from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn, and vice versa.

Whether the earlier astrological tradition is prior to the influences of Indian mainstream astrology is questionable and it is the subject of archeological research. Pandit Atombapu Sharma, the royal astrologer of Maharaja Churachand Singh (1891 – 1941 A.D.) said that when there was *uttarāyana*, i.e. the sun is proceeding northward, Aryan race was making towards the eastern direction by crossing the river Saraswati, then a sub-section reached to Mithila, the lord settled by the Mithis of which Rajarshi Janak was the leader. The "Meitei" word is derived from Mithila in Bihar. In his book *Harei Marre*, Pandit Sharma traces the origin of Meitei group, their *gotra* to the Brahman of Mithila when we have so many, places of their migration considered from the European and Indian Scholar/ indologists. *Harei Marre* corresponds to *Dhanistat/Deliphenii* of

Sanskrit and Alpha of western astronomy. This star is the determinant of the position of the Sun (northward or southward direction)

Nobody questioned his theory based on the basis of Meitei myth and *Vedanga Jyotish* and data. Unfortunately the theory of first arrival of the group of Aryans in Maninur. during the early Vedic times has not been accepted by the scholars in the present days.

The Meites were familiar with the local names of 12 Rashis/ Zodiac, 9 planets, 27/30 name of stars and different theories of Veda, Siddhantic and post – Siddhantic periods on grounds of their culture and literature. There were many legends, myths and romantic stories associated with the heavenly bodies by the 17th Century. Seven days of the week are the Great Bear. The stars are thought to be the house of gods. The Pleiads known as *Khongiom-uiubis* are fancied to be the seven girls of the Luwang clan of the Meitheis. They have different Manipuri names; lived separately by the precession of the equinoxes. Identification of Meitei names of stars with Sanskrit/ Bengali/English names has some problems.

Some scholars think that the stars–*Shajik* and *Thaba* (male and female lovers) are not two but one star as sun in the morning and in the evening – two names of the same star. The star that is visible at the day break of Tuesday and Friday is called Shajik. If it is sun at the time of sunset on these days it is known as Thaba. Again, some names of stars are meant for a group of stars and not for only one star. They have neither head or tail; circular in shape. The term *Nakshtra*/Star is used in a special sense in astrology. It is not to be confused with *Tara* as the *nakshtra* star must be within 32 *compha* (fraction) of the Bishnovite (position of Equinoctial circle). *Uttaryana* (the sun's northern declination takes place of the 1st day of *Phairen* (February - March) When the star—*Harei maye*, the moon and the Sun are appearing in the some line. The phenomenon occurs after every 5 years. Pole star is translated as *Chap*, *Dhrubatara* or *Ningthou Shidaba* (immortal god). It is sacred to the Meitei astrologers. More of it will appear in connection with the source materials for consultation and prediction.

Like other civilized people of the world the Meitei are keen observers of nature both earthly and celestial. They were observing nature in a year for following their religious and social purposes. They use such terms as *Thabi*, *Korou* for the sun, *Thabi Mahum* (Halo, eclipse). The *Loitam Thaja* for the moon system of counting, *Horiba*

(Division), *Puriba* (multiplication), *Langbum* (Union), *Dasa apaibi* (misfortune time), *Khoiren* (Life span), *Tu uba* (to see for or early dawn), *Yenkhong Ahanba* (first crow of the cock), *Charoi tetu Khongba* (call of the drongo bird in the early morning) *Chingkhei Hunba* (first light), *Numit Wakhong Lonba* (the sun topping the growing bamboo), *Yuthak* (Manipuri system of hour), In many myththe sun and the moon are treated in the masculine gender. In some cases the moon is addressed as feminine beauty.

The moon was known to be the creator of the months such as the *Mapung* = full moon. *Thakhai* (15 days or fortnight). The words "*Tha*" is meant for the sky, a planet, as well as for the names of 12 months. The sun is described as the *Yoimayai Taodanba*, chief of the planets and sustainer of living beings which was in agreement with heliocentric theory of Heavenly bodies. Lucky, unlucky days and months, *makmei* (day according to the change of the moon, *Laicha* (food for the evil spirits), *tatnaba* (inimical days), *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and some special characteristic and very strict in guiding their lives. The system of counting a day is from one sunrise to another sunrise and not from midnight to midnight as stated in modern method. So the problem before us is the *tithi/thaban* or order of the day continues to exist after sunrise of the following days, both days will have the same *thaban*. When a new *tithi* begin after sunrise and ends before sunrise of the following days there will be two *thabans* in the same day. This happens in the *Panjikas* and calendars published by the concerned association and astrologer.

SOURCES MATERIALLY AND INSTRUMENTALLY

The Ganak Brahmans and court astrologers wrote several books on astrology, astronomy; signs of Heavenly Bodies and even the times of earthquakes. These signs have been studied by the approved heads of *Panji Laisong*/Royal College of the king. The noted astrologers are known as *Panji Ganita Lallup Chingba* (Father of Lallup/assigned duty) and *Chandra Siddhanta* (during the reign of Maharaja Bhagya Chandra (1762-1798). There are private or local level practitioners who were not in the know of the Kings and titleholders. The recognized authority was the ruler with his assembly of nobles and the approved people. The manuscripts in the possession of the court cannot be consulted by private persons. Important books written in Meitei script, Bengali and Sanskrit languages are *Leisemlon, Tharon, Leichinlon* (series of clouds), *Khutlon, Subika/Shibika, Yumsharol, Royal diary/Cheitharol Kumbaba, Cheitharol* (lore of year release), *Jyotish Chandrika, Laghu Jyotish Chandrika, Thawanmichaklon, Yumsharol* (Vastu Shastra), *Tanyeirol* (Treatise on time measurement) *Panjikas* viz *Bhagyavati Panjika* initiated by Atom Bapu Sharma, *Chandrabda Panjika* edited by Th. Suro Singh and Raj Mantri Paba published by the Govindajee Temple Board and journals like *Panjigi Pao, Chandrabda Patrika,* etc. were being published since 1956 A.D. but they ceased to be published at present. The author is associated with some issues in some capacities. Books published in Manipuri are not considered necessary. I came across many valuable and rare Bengali books on astrology and astronomy in the possession of Manipuri Brahmans settled in Mandlay in Myanmar (2006). They observed Hindu festivals whole heartedly and with enthusiasm. *Leishemlol* (story of the creation of the universe) – gives the references to hours, name of days, months and hours. They were advised to write in *Meitei-che* (paper prepared in Manipur) by order of the Maharaja. Careful reading shows but they smack of the influence of Bengali works dealing with – eclipse, earthquake, thunder, etc.

Tharol – (Lore of Manipur months) was written during the reign of Khagemba in the 17th century. Accounts are found to vary from one manuscript to another. Each month has two or three names also. All of them are connected with the creation story, worship of Almighty Guru, Earth goddess and other deities, In another account the months are determined by agricultural operations in a well settled society such as, sowing of the seed, harvesting and storing the paddy in the grocery.

Names were changed in the first century A.D. after the arrival of Poireiton, the fables of colonizer of Manipur. Ten months out of twelve are named after his activities. Two months, namely *Sajibu* (about March-April) and *Poinu* (December – January) have astronomical significance according to the text.

Thawanmichaklon (stories about the stars). Sometimes they are called *Thawaimichak,* constituents of body and soul. Names of heroes, heroines, Scholars, etc. are immortalized by the Manipuri names of stars.

According to their belief some of the stars are *Changthokpa* (ingress), *shithokpa* (exit, egress) and some to be both. *Changthokpa* stars are considering auspicious for every undertaking. Some of the stars viz *Sajik* and *Kalpurush* are male. *Thaba* and *Khongjomnubi* (Pleiads) are female. There are some more males and females. Names of Meitei stars are significant and recommended for the worship of *apokpas*/forefathers of Manipuri clans.

***Yumsharol* (*Meitei Vāstu Shastra*)** – The heat, weather and temperature have effect on health, longevity and stature of the people. The ancient Meiteis lived in wooden or bamboo with mud and cowdung structures. Brick temples are especially constructed for the gods and goddesses in pre-vaishnovite and Vaishnavite periods. Descriptions of bamboos, types of trees, for house construction, laying of foundation stones, *Jātrā* (Chief pillar) and types of using different trees for the *Jātrā* auspicious trees, nuns and location/shrines of different presiding deities, *Puja* for adoring them, etc. auspicious time for opening the temple, assembly hall or residential building the future form the theme. The tradition of keeping spaces for rooms, fireplace and spaces for God *Sanamahi* and goddess *Leimarel* is recorded.

Fire will burn up the house if the dwellers entered the room from 22 *Magha* (February) to 8 *Phalgun* (March) when *Rabi*/sun god is residing in *Harei Maye.* In addition to *bleeding days,* prohibited days for foundation of a house, there are some special features for them only. Foundation of a house is allowed on such months as 5th 7th, 9th, 10th and 11th months counted from the day on which the foetus was formed. But this was not the case with the birth month, 6th and 8th month counted from the month of conception.

Yumsharol is strictly followed for adherence since their settlement. Now a days, this system has been abandoned in favour of brick building in urban areas. The south west of the house is reserved for god Sanamahi, the middle portion of Imoinu *Ahongbi* (hearth), etc. The planning of home stands for the regulation of the wealthier living, air conditioning and storage of necessary items. The rules are carefully discussed in different ways in this type of *vāstu shāstra.*

Shubika/Shibika—It is derived from the word *Shivajana* or the saying of god Shiva Mahadeva. The norms of days, months and Hindu timings have been current since the writing of Shubika. In every shubika manuscript No. 207 is put to imply god Shiva, Durga, *Bindu/ Sunya/*dot and lucky number. It is a science which can remove ignorance. Knowledge, Science, etc. which govern the life, birth, and decay of the organism. It discusses in details, the sun, the moon, astrological events by observing since time memorial. What is not approved by *Shubika* is not done even now. It deals with methods of calculation for astrology and astronomy at the rural areas of Manipur state. In archaic language the sun and the moon are known by the word "*San Phangba*". It has version of earthquake (popular used to utter *chaknga/*rice-fish to satisfy the hunger of orphan babies), eclipse (*Rahu* and *Ketu* attacking the sun and the moon (the people used to say *tharo* (give up) when they saw the eclipse. From the royal diary we know that the prediction of outside astrologers was falsified by local astrologers on the occurrence of the eclipse.

Shubika falls into three types—(1) *Shubika Yumshetpa*, (2) *Shubika choujit* and (3) *Shubika Laishaba.* The first one is a kind of illustrated manuscript with picture of gods and goddesses. Pictures of stars and planets are also shown by artists. This method of prediction by touching a picture is called *Chengba Khutlou* relating to the age, sex of the questioner. The result is shown by the help of charts, written accounts and signs. A particular *shubika* is different from another in method, style and colour. Different colours, dyes are used in them. They are prepared from turmeric, the liquid of lime and vegetable dyes.

Statements connected with the rules of constructing a house, bride and groom matching, loss of property and cultural situation are covered. Name of author or writer is not found in most of the manuscript. In some particular cases the name of Angom Gopi, the court pandit of Bhagyachandra Maharaja was listed. Sometimes the name of the copyist Ngangbam Romal Singh Khurkhul village (loi) is inserted in the concluding page.

The *shubika* varieties are the valuable possession of Manipuri astrologer. Different *chakpa/*Scheduled caste group) were highly cultured in Meitei script and possessed different versions of *shubikas.*

Some of them contain words of primitive origin and corrupted Sanskrit words. Some of them have been edited and published with notes and English introductions by the interested persons, now-a-days.

Tan Yeishang—These are different texts which give different periods about the introduction of computation of Manipuri timing and founding of an institution of officials known as *Tanyei Shang* during the time of Maharaja Khuyoi Tompok (154-264 A.D.). There is another school which says that it was introduced by Lolans Pakhangba (Lainung Lonja Ariba) is the in the pre-Christian period. The time was computed with the help of a bowl to be filled by water by a process. A day is divided into 8 *yuthaks* or 180 minutes (24 hours) each of which consisted of 8 hours of *wang* (*pung* or mound) which is about 22½ minutes in modern times. They made use of such terms as *Mikup* (wink), *Nahum* (second), *Hai, Hayeng* (to-morrow), *hangchit* (Day after to-morrow) etc.

Expert officials were appointed to measure time at morning, day time and evening. During the beating of the *tan* (drum) the people were obliged to stop their work. It was supposed to be the time to evil spirits. At sunrise the bards start singing. The bards sing the song of awakening the king with the help of the fiddle playing. Hindu deities are awakened in the temples with the bell of *Mangalarati.* The *sadhaks* have a *darshan* of Shri Govindaji at *Brahma Muhurta.* The earlier method of doing *Subhakarma, Punya karma,* etc. are now stopped.

One school of thought holds, the theory that the *ghatika yantra* is prepared according to the *bhakti marga* of *Shrimad Bhagavatam* and not on the method of *Yujurveda* and *Siddhanta* system. A day is the personification of a year or a tiny form of a year.

Eight clans of the Meiteis prevail over eight *yuthaks* of a day. The four hours of the night are controlled by *Khaba Nganba, Luwang, Sarang Leishangthem* and *Haorok Konthou.* The four hours of the morning are under the jurisdiction of Ningthouja, Moirang, Angom and Khuman clans. This system is also studied from the artistic standpoint. The two presiding deities Yangdonba and Yangdonbi are kept near the cistern. They were supped to meet each other in each *yuthak.*

The Manipuris were familiar with the system of *Panchanga.* But they modified the model in order to fit into their local culture and Shri Govinda's devotional service according to *Asta Kala Lila.* The

English system of timing was made to correspond to Meitei system during the reign of Maharaja Nar Singh.

INTERCALARY MONTH (*MALAMASHA*)

We discussed already that there is the difference of a lunar year and solar year. The authors of *Meitei Puya* knew the secret of 12 and 13 months in making the adjustments - by declaring the 13th lunar month for every third year as *Malamasha* or *Aphaiba tha phaiba* (to stop agricultural activities). In the *Adhika Masha* no religious service is to be performed.

A legend runs - 6 nobles have taken away 6 hours out of 72 (24x3). 3 hours are equal to 1 *Yuthak* or Manipuri *pung*. 5 gods have dived 5 hours into the water. There is the left out cases of 61 hours (61 *sharois* or attendants of the important deities). Gods have the system of 72 hours, whereas man has a system of 61 hours. 3 hours are added to 61 and thereby making 64 (64 *phamdous*). The excess 3 hours are hidden in a day and kept beneath the drum of *Tan players.* There is an excess of one month in every 3 hour when the excess 3 hours are accumulated. 61 hours are counted as 64 wrongly everyday by the people.

We have thirteen months in every three years (or 2½ years).

Laghu Jyotish Chandrika—The local *Chandrabda era* is a manual or local composition based on almanac and *Surya Siddhanta.* The manuscript preparation took five months in the finalisation by junior astrologer, grandson of Khumbong Chandra Siddhanta during the reign of Maharaj Gambhir Singh (1825-1834). *Laghu Jyotish Chandrika* is not traceable.

MEITEI SYSTEM OF CHEITHABA
(DECLARATION OF THE NEW YEAR)

Cheithaba (or the year releaser) is a peculiar institution of the Meiteis in connection with the prediction, preparation of the end of a year and preparation of a horoscope. A *cheithaba* is different from the Roman culture and primitive concepts. He is an official of the king/

the state for a particular year which was named after him. Before the introduction of this system by king Kyamba (1467-1508 A.D.) earlier system was that 4 officers of 4 *panas/* division hill *khok* (a species of bamboo, tall but small) with little bells and used to go to the divisions of the Manipur valley and announced the end of the year. A *cheithaba* agreed to make an oath to shoulder all the misfortunes of the country till he was replaced by a successor for the next year. The *maibas* (pundits) used to compare the horoscope of the *cheithaba* with that of the king and the state. If there is correspondence a candidate was appointed as a *Cheithaba*. He handed over the charge to the successor. In the Palace hall after the singing of *Kirtans* the head of the astrologers (a Konok Brahman) read out the fortunes of the coming year (flood, rain, crop, misfortunes etc). After reading the results, the incoming and outgoing *cheithaba* made their speeches in archaic language. There has been as many as 483 year releasers (*cheithaba*) up to 1967. He was given 2½ acres of cultivable plot of land, clothes, a basket of *Thumpat* (Salt cack). At one time tax free land of 2½ acres were given. At another time Rs. 100/- was given. At present it is raised up to Rs. 500/-. The outgoing one also got the same prizes. Though king Kyamba introduced this system formal entry of the same in the royal chronicle was made in 1766 A.D.

The haralder of the new year gave some presents to the king and the nobles, and also to Shri Govindaji.

The person selected for a *Cheithaba* must be a male and belong to *Loi* (Schedule caste). The classes of people known as Rajkumars, Muslims and hill tribes were not eligible for this post. During his term, nobody can meet him. He must live peacefully without doing any work. A person was appointed to work for him. He was free from compulsory or forced labour. There is a restriction for him on food and drink. He must be free from rain and mist and should not touch the sharp weapons. If blood comes from his body, it was believed, the community with suffer. He must live with his wife.

The ceremony is held on the day of *Sajibu Cheiraoba*, which was later identified with *Charak Puja*. In the ceremony the astrologer has to advise the Maharaja in turning his face in putting on the customary dress. The name of the Cheithaba, his place, year must be inserted in the preparation of a horoscope at the margin or back side of the horoscope by every astrologer. The, British writers like J.C. Higgins, T.C. Hodson etc. recorded *cheithaba* in their writings.

The Manipuris in the past observed *sillenba* or rest for 5 days without break after celebration of this festival. It is normally in the month of *Shajibu* about mid April.)

ASTROLOGY FOR MARRIAGE RITES AND RITUALS

A Manipuri is under obligation to consult the astrologer for fixing auspicious timing for all life's ceremonies, viz, naming of child, suitable profession and guidance. These are described as *Swadharma* for all Hindu-Manipuris, what one should do, on what day for marriage, how to get rid of *apaibi dosha*/accidental misfortune, declaration of engagement, etc. A family member is obliged to consult an astrologer who will foretell about the family members before the coming of *Sajibu* (April) *Cheiraoba* to which we have referred already. To follow the expiation ceremony by puja before hand is the step towards a good life. The *Janma Nakshatra*/birth star controls the destiny of a person which can be controlled by reading the sacred text of *Gopal Srahasranam*, *Vishnu Sahastranama* and worshipping Lord Siva or Naran (Vishnu) on sacred days. Astrology has added a new perspective to the marriage relations among the endogamous clans which is prohibited from the view point of anthropology.

There is a strong tradition of disallowing marriage among three *ahals* (three elders). They are known as *Jeistha* groom, *Jeistha* bride and *Jeishtha* month. The first son of a parent cannot marry the first daughter of a parent. The *Jeistha* month is called *Kalen* or the elder month by the Manipuri astrologers. It also contains information as to the importance of the month of birth of the bride and the bridegroom, birthday and star of groom and the bride. Nowadays most of the injunctions are ignored except the birthday of the groom and the bride in a court marriage and modern day solemnisation of marriage ceremony.

The *Kalen tha* or Summer month (May) is used in a conative sense and need not be confused with the Manipuri 2nd month/Kalen upto *Cheiraoba* (*Charak puja*) the sun occupied the position of *Mesha Rashi* (31 days) and it then enters *Vrisha Rashi* which is called *Saura Jeistha* or *Kalentha*. It may have 31 days if we interpret it in terms of English Calender.

Horary astrology—It is a branch of astrology which deals with the methods answering spontaneously a set of questions at the time when they are put. This system has been studied and practised along with the Hindu astrology in this part of the country during the reign of king Charairongba and Churachand Maharaja. *Ramala Sastra* which is based on the study of breathing through the nostril and *Sakuna Sastra* which deals with omens are allied to this field. They were widely practiced by Manipuri warriors. There were astrologers like Khwai Kekru, Ganak Thengra and Khongnang Thaba who were endowed with divine gifts.

When these gifted astrologers combined their gifts with be knowledge of horary astrology, we find that the results are delivered with great success. But such gifted persons are very few. Modern science however would not support such claims.

This horary system is based on the planetary positions, and the laws governing the same. Pandit Atombapu Sharma and some of his contemporaries were renowned for their knowledge in this branch during the time of Maharaja Churachand Singh (1891-1941) at the fixing of date for an organisation called Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha under the Chairmanship of the Maharaja himself.

ASTROLOGY UNDER THE KINGS OF MANIPUR (33 A.D. - 1950)

Fortune tellers, palmists and *Maibies*/priesters adopted methods by throwing coins on the floor, throwing *tulasi* leaves on some presiding deities and gave predictions. The fortunes of the state and war had been predicted in these centuries. There were certain references to the astrological records in the royal diary called *Cheitharol Kumbaba* recorded mostly by the consent of the Maharajas.

MANIPURI ASTROLOGY IN BURMESE/MYANMARESE COURT

The history of Pagoda in the Burmese town at Segain informs us that a Brahman from Manipur by name Jibananda laid the foundation stone of Kaumado Pagoda in the 16th century A.D. In the war of devastation (1819-25) many Manipuris were captured and about to be killed by the Burmese general after carrying them in some parts of Burma. The captives pleaded that they were all Brahmans and king's priests. They were exempted from such crisis according to their law. They were all *Punya* profile people who can master the planetary positions and give fruitful predictions. The Burmese kings knew their power and employed them as *Plonnas* (coming from *Puṇya*) in the court as royal astrologers. They were given enough rent free lands. They prepared the horoscopes of the royal family and the relatives of the noble family by writing horoscopes in Pali language with Burmese characters. Manipuri astrologers were are very much wanted by king Thibaw, the last deposed king of Burma to write the horoscope of his child while in prison in Ratnagiri jail in Maharastra. He cursed the British people for bringing downfall.

Burmese prime minister UNu did not take part in the meeting of leaders who were all assassinated secretly. Being a believer himself in astrology, he was saved from this mishappening. On the occasion of his installation as the Prime Minister of independent Burma/ Myanmar the Manipuri Bamons (Brahman) performed the religious ceremony and sprinkled holy water of Irawadi river on his head.

In the chroncle *Cheitharol Kumababa*, right from the reign of the first king Nongda Lairel Pakhangba (33 A.D.), accounts of the appearance of comets, earthquakes, important events of the calendars, names of famous astrologers, *Chandra Shiddhantas*, the founding of *Panji Loisang* (establishment of astrological department) during the reign of Maharaj Garibniwaz (1709-1748) and their role and significance are recorded. There was high accuracy in their calculations. They were far in advanced position than in other states like Burma (Mynmar), West Bengal (Sylhet, Nabadwip etc.) although *Ganak Brahmans* from Assam and Bengal came from these areas to Manipuri Court.

There were forecasts by the astrogers during the pregnancy of the queen and birth of king Charairongba's sons and his successor, Garibniwaz, *Rajbhaga Leiba* of the princes (star for the throne) and their attempts for war, etc.

Punishment for wrong predictions has been severe and retributive. The erratic, astrologers were beaten, punished with degradation, excommunication from society, expulsions from the state. Dipping the astrologers under the water of the tank/river for the whole night for wrong calculation and prediction was practised.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

(1) Manipuri *Suvika* gives account of *tatnaba* (parting), *Laijao Leiba* (facing the evil spirit), *Thasi* (30th day), *Thanini*, food prohibited on certain days contain medical, horticultural and family relations recommended by the ancient and medieval savants. The moon is the nearest celestial body to the earth and its influence is felt in a visible manner as the full moon influences the rising tides. These forces must be exerting influence on all material constituency of the earth, and consideration lends some support to the theory of planetary influences. Among the interesting practices is the prediction of actual coming out of the tiger from the bush in the *Keibal* (fencing for hunting tiger), the complete disappearance of the tiger in the direction of *Thasi* (New moon). The practice of preparing horoscope for Shri Govindaji (the royal deity of Manipur) and popularity of horoscopic names of famous person in history preserving the horoscopes of kings seem to have been understood by them. In real life, horoscopic name was better known than the actual name of some significant and famous persons.

(2) Alpha/*Dhrista* (*Harei Maye*) headed the list of stars according to the early movement of a group of Aryans. Statement of time of the year of which the sun crosses the equator is purely verbal. In later Vedanga Jyotish period, the adhoc charges were done from Orion to Pleiades, *Bharani* and then to *Asvini*. The arrangement of counting from *Aswini* has stayed on till to-day.

The Manipuri Pandits were quite familiar with the *Siddhantic* system, *Panchangas* and other branches of *gonit*, *phabit* and *samhitas*. Due credit must be given to them because they Knew that Manipur being east of Bengal has the timings of sunrise earlier than that of Bengal. There is a difference of one *danda* or 24 minutes. As a result of such differences in fixing a day of Hindu festival they observed a day late according to the order of the Maharaja.

The British moved into the activity of introducing the modern method of timing I.S.T. for computation of timing of *Gwalarati* of Shri Govindaji was changed from the actual evening day making home time earlier adjustment as fire and ringing of the gong were stopped by the allied forces, during the IInd World War. The *Antakal* timing of Govinda's devotional service by the *sebaits* of the palace which started functioning from the time of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra is still continuing under the control of Govindaji temple Board. This was observed till independence of India in 1947 (except local religious services).

(3) In the modern times, there have been developments in calendar reform, computer science, radio-astronomy, research works in the universities and the planetariums. The accuracy of dates, eras, eclipse have to be evaluated and tested on a scientific basis. In fact traditional system of Manipur forms an important part of world's wealth of knowledge.

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6. The author was the founder secretary of Manipur Astrological Society, Imphal who was also involved in publishing calendars, Meetei *Pañjīkās* and books/Journals in Manipur in different capacities. He is the honorary member of the *Viśliddha Siddhānta Pañjīkā* (Kolkatta) since, 1961. He was honoured by state Manipur State Archives of Art and Culture Department for his collection and donation of the *pañjīkās* and books for personnel preservation in 2008.

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Vaishnavism in Manipur (Theory and Practice)

INTRODUCTION

Man is ever hungry for new knowledge. He hunts everywhere, the deepest ocean, the highest peak and the arid desert facing dangers bravely, challenging any kind of difficulties, and even gives up the precious life for the new knowledge, which he wishes to hand over to his fellow beings. This urge in man makes adventures and invasions, discoveries and inventions thereby gaining new ideas, information, form of administration and others. Man cannot remain satisfied to the place he lives in, to the environment he is acquainted with, to the status he acquires, to the wealth he inherits, to the Knowledge he possesses and to what he is as designed by destiny, If man is satisfied with what he is or has, there would have been no human civilisation, no exchange of 'thoughts and cultures, no broad outlook and consequently no religions. On the coining of a new idea and if the idea appears to have valuable elements more than the old one, man embraces the new and there arises, in general, conflicts between the votaries of the new one and the old one. Vaishnavism, one of the most important branch or organ of Hinduism came to Manipur through the agency of migrated Brahmans from many parts of India, They came here either by chance or by circumstances that made them leave their homes and sought suitable places to live in, and they came in small numbers and also with or without the acknowledgement of the kings of this land. It is said that when King *Kyamba* (15th century A.D.) wondered on the inherent power of a piece of stone which was presented to him by the Pong king *Khikhomba*, the King was advised to let the *Stone* worship by someone who had threads on the shoulder, and after a long searched, such a person was found, and the worship was conducted. Since then, the new religion was introduced in thus land on the advice of the king, who actually was not at that time, a votary of the new religion. Vaishnavism came to Manipur and the new religion to the Meiteis of that time, developed in course of time. And now, it can be said that the Manipuri society is leading the Vaishnava sect of the world in its visible character. It will be difficult to say that whether all the Manipuri Vaishnavas understand the concept of Vaishnavism in detail or not, but it can be said that all the Manipuri Vaishnavas practise it as if they understand the concepts clearly.

Vaishnavism In Manipur: It is said that the icon of *Hnuman* was worshiped during the time of King *Khumomba* (1263–1278) [A. Chitreswar: Sankirtana Vichar, Imphal, 1988, page 1]. But, the record of worship of *Vishnu* in Stone form during King *Kyamba* (1467–1508) is generally referred to as the beginning of Vaishnavism in Manipur. The new religion was introduced during the time of King *khagemba* (1597–1652). However, Hinduism was not fully followed either by the King or the people at that time. Worship of Hindu Gods and Goddesses were permitted. King *Charairongba* (1697–1709) is regarded as the first ruler who had initiation in the Radha-Krishna cult of Vaishnavism from a Brahmin. *Rai Vanamali* and the Deity which was installed and worshiped at that time is still worshiping by the *Guru Aribam* group as *Shri Madana Mohanji* [A.C. Sharrna: Sankirtana Vichara, Vol. II, Imphal, 2002, page 12]. After him, his able son, *Garibaniwaj* (1709–1748) embraced Hinduism in the *Ramandi* cult from a notable preacher, *Santadas Goshai.* and the religion had spread far and wide under royal patronage in the Manipur vallty. The present Vaishnavism in Manipur with its unique theology and distinctive practices having impact on music, dance and literature, is the presentation of Rajarshi *Bhaiqyachandra* (1759–1798), who adopted *Goudiya* Vaishnavism, from Guru *Paramanda Thakur* and during the reign of the Rajarshi five disciples of Shri, *Marottam Thakur* Mahashai, namely Shri Ganga *Narayana Chakravarti,* Shri *Krishna Charan Chakravarti.* Shri *Kunjabiharti.* Shri *Nidhirama* Acharya Thakur and Shri *Ramgopal* Vairagya came and preached the Goudiya Vaishnavism in an organised manner. [Th.Komol: Bhakti Sar Sangrah Vaishnava

Kanthahara], Moreover, Rajarshi Bhaigyachandra installed important Deities in different parts of Manipur and even in *Navadwip*, (Bengal), besides being the architect of the world famed *Rasa Leela*, dance. Development of *Sankirtana* and other religious celebrations were contributed by the successor kings after Rajarshi, as for instance, Maharaja *Gambhir* Singh introduced the *Ratha Yatra* festival, for the first time in Manipur on the 2nd *Ingel* month, 1833 [Cheitharol Kumbaba, page 241]. The 165 years from the date of installation of Shri Shri *Gavindaji* (1775) to the time of Maharaja Chudachand Singh(1391–1941) is recorded as the 'Golden Age' of Vaishnavism in Manipur, during which all the splendours, all the best of Goudiya Vaishnavism were produced in Manipur. With the coming of modem democracy after independence, the rigid and orthodox systems followed under the Maharaja and his Council of Religious Activities called 'Brahma Sabha', have been faded away, and the present Vaishnava society is not actually what other Mnipuri Vaishnavas living outside the state think of. To them, people from Manipur are still regarded as the people from the land of God, Sri Govindaji and considered as lucky to be in the land of Govindaji. During the 'Golden Age the royal army regarded the *Namavali* (the cloth having the name of the lord marked) and the symbol of Lord on the parts of the body as the most important, in the battle field. The devotees regarded the food ramnants of Shri Govindaji as the most important thing, and is clearly shown by the story of one marathon race run by Tambra Singh, in the event of *Jilla Durbar* by King Chandrakirti(1850–1886).

Theory of Vaishnavism: The Vaishnavism of Manipur has a distinctive character. Among the accepted factors of being a distinguished one, a factor may be that the seed of Vaishnavism from Bengal School of thought brought up in the sweet soil amidst the moderate climate of Manipur, well guarded by the able kings and well cultured by notable dedicated scholars gave rise to the present form of the *ism.* The other important factor may be that Vaishnavism is a sect of Hinduism and followers of different sects other than Vaishnavism came to this land, the notable ones were the Brahmins from all directions, who came with their family deities and long followed philosophies of their own, and that they might have sought permission from the then kings of their times to allow them observe their systems and perhaps, might have presented the kings for being accepted one to their systems, consequently the Vaishnavism of Manipur, though formally following *Achintvavedaaveda Vada* of *Chaitanva* Mahaprabhu, would have elements from the other Schools of thoughts. Another factor on this account may be that at, the time of introducing the religious system there might have no adequate books to be read before the people, or published for reading by the mass. The order of the king and of the council assisting him advised the people to follow this or that. The Council would have representations from different groups having varied ideology, and hence the customary laws would include elements from various ideals. We may recall here, "in the age of Kali, four *Sampradayas, Shri, Madhvi, Rudra* and *Sanaka* will lead people to become man of character". [O. Gokulchand: Vaishnva itihas, Imphal, 1943, page 77]. For convenience, we can discus the core teaching of these four schools and see whether there were elements from these thuoghts in the Goudiya Vaishnavism of Manipur.

Shri Sampradaya was established by *Ramanuja* in the 12th Century under the philosophy of *Visisitaadvaita* which stated that all are the products of Brahma and the world along with the individual souls are not illusion for they are the projection from the only one Brahma who exists. There is no such thing, according to the thought, like Union with Brahma. however, he describes three types of *Jiva – Nitva* (eternal) Mukta (liberated) and Baddha (bounded). This is the second after the Monism of *Sankara.* Ramanuja called Brahma as *Narayana* who dwells in Vaikuntha with His eternal power Lakshmi and She leads the *Jiva* or the individual Souls to Narayana. *Shri Sampradaya* worships Narayana with or without Lakshmi, Rama with or without Sita. It is noteworthy that *Garibaniwaj* Maharaja adopted *Ramandi* Dharma which was otherwise called as *Ramat dharma,* developed by *Ramananda* a disciple of *Raghavananda* who was a disciple of *Harinanda.* a disciple of *Devananda* and he was a successor disciple of *Ramanuja* of the founder of *Shri Sampradaya* and hence that Ramat dharma simply a remodelled form of *Shri Sampradayal* Vaishriava Itihas, page 78). Santadas Goshai was a follower of Ramananda. He influenced Garibaniwaj in worshiping Rama instead of Krishna. Still, Ramandi is a form of Vaishnavism.

Madhvi Sampradaya was established by Madhava (13 c) based on his thought 'Dvaita' (dualism). His opinion is that World, Jiva and Brahma are all different. He describes five distinct differences.

According to him good character, studies of the Vedas, self control, renunciation and self surrender to the Lord can lead to Him. The essential four things for Vishnu pujah are *Ankan* (marks of the Lord on the body of the devotee), *Namakarana* (naming of a person with a prefix of the name of Bhagavan), *Bhajana* (recitation of the name and glory of the Lord) and *Smarana* (constant rememberance). He advocated worship of *Shiva* and *Durga* besides *Vishnu* and *Lakshmi.*

Rudra Sampradaya is the sect following *Shuddhaadvalta Vada* of *Ballabha,* who explained monism without using anything like *Maya* of *Shankara,* and *Visista* of *Ramanuja.* According to him, Soul and World exist but not without Brahma. Goal of life is not liberation but is to participate eternally in the sports of Shri Krishna in *Goloka Vrindavana.* Gopis of Vrindavana felt *tanmayata* or oneness with the Lord during *Rasa Leela.* He advocated worship of *Gopaldeva.*

Nimat Sampradaya was established by *Nimbarka* on the basis of '*Dvaitaadvaita Vada*! The sect is known as *Sanaka* or *Nimbadvaitva* also. According to Nimbarka, the World and the Soul differ from Brahma because the qualities of Brahma are not in them, but as Brahma is said all pervading, there is no place where there is no Brahma. Consequently the three are one and there is no differences. The concept of four *Vyuhas* or forms such as, *Vasudeva, Shankarshana. Aniruddha. Pradyumna* are enumerated in the theory. Nimbarka worshiped Shri Krishna, who is faultless, who has no evil quality and who is *Chinmava* or consisting of pure intelligence only and is manifested in the above four forms or Vyuhas. Shri Krishna is worshiped with or without *Radha,* but there is the concept of Radha to the Vaishnavas in the single form of Krishna. Nimbarka took up the Bhagavattam as authori-tative book besides the three(Brahma Sutra,Upanishads, Gita).

Before considering about the *Achintyabhedaabheda* Vada of Shri Chaitanya, we conclude that the Vaishnavism in Manipur contained the best elements from the above briefly considered and purely Hindu thoughts besides the elements taken from the erstwhile religion of Manipur. In short, Manipuri Vaishnavas practise a special and unique theology which contains the best elements from the various thoughts of the notable philosophers from both the incoming and former religions. [For example, Ramanuja's - Shri leads Jivas to the Lord Chaitanya's *Sakhi Bhava*: Madhava's concept of four essential thing for Vishnu pujan and of Shaktaism versus the system of naming neophytes and theory of Shakti in Chaitanya's concept; Nimbarka's concept of four vyuha and of Chinmaya versus those of Chaitanya's; Ballabh's – goal of life is not liberation etc. versus Chaitanya's *seva bhava*; so on].

In almost all the temples in Manipur, if not specified worship of many deities – Radha Krishna, Jagannatha – Subhadra – Bailabhadra, Gouranga – Nityananda, Gopaldeva, Shalchakras guarded by the icons of Hanumana and Gadura, sometimes with Shiva linga with or without Parvati are conducted. In the Vaishnava temples of Manipur Durga Pujah, Ratha Yatra, Holi or Dol-yatra and other religious functions are performed.

Acoording to Chaitanya, Shri Krishna is the most perfect form of Vishnu and He is the manifestation of love and grace. There is a special energy which gives Him delight and the spark in the rays of this energy give delight to the devotees, and known as *Hladini*, and is one of the three forms of Chit-*shakti* (Intellectual capacity). The other two are the *Sandhin* (existence) and *Samvit* (knowledge). *Hladini Shakti* cannot be separated from Shri Krishna, and if manifested becomes the form of Radha. Jiva or the individual soul is like an atom. Light of the Sun is a part or a product of the Sun and lights the Sun itself. However, light cannot be fully separated from, the Sun. In this manner Soul is different and at the same time not different from Brahman, and is not easily thought of or conceived. Only devotion to Krishna can annihilate the sins procured by the Jiva and the Jiva can have eternal service to Him, but cannot merge fully in Him. (*Hindu Dharmagi Shaktam*, Imphal, 2002, page 107).

The *Ujjwalanilamani* of Shri Rupa Goswami gives a detailed account of the *Ragaanuga* Bhakti or the way of following the feeling or interest in Krishna as instructed by Chaitanya to his followers. The Ragaanuga Bhakti with its various details in practice are described in many books of this School. 'Ujjwalanilamani Kiranah' of Vishwanatha is a remarkable one. The concept of Ragaanuga Bhakti is summarised herein for ready reference.

Ragaanuga is defined as the follow-up of the taste or *rasa* found from the synthesis of three forms of thoughts or *Bhavas*, known as *Vibhava, Anubhava and Vyabhacharibhava.* The Vibhava is any condition which produces or develops a particular state of body and or mind, and it has two sub-divistions called *Alambana* (depending style) and *Uddipana* (giving excitement). In this, the personality of Shri Krishna and the things which make the devotees remember Him are described in detail. He possesses every kind of personality to suit every kind of mistress, and hence, He is said as the '*rasik-sekhara*', one who knows best any taste. A devotee is excited when seeing a peacock feather, a cloud etc. in the thought of Krishna. When a devotee remembers as soon as he sees the mnemonic articles of Krishna, another feeling to the devotee develops which is called as '*anubhava*' in which the practitioner starts to experience twenty Kinds of mental attitudes which make the devotee forget the outside world, its necessary 'possession-relation' principle has been dissolved and attachment to the person concerned (Krishna) becomes very active. Progressed in this manner, the devotee expresses eight kinds of external behaviours which are collectively known as *'astasa' swastika-vikara'*, such as *stambha* (still like a pillar). *sweda* (sweating), *romancha* (horripilation, *shwarveda* (irregular breathing), *vepathu* (trembling), *vaivarna* (change of complexion), *ashru* (sheding of tears) and *pralaya* (fainting). It is a very important stage achieved by a devotee practising the path of (*ragaanuga*). There are four stages of expressing the (*asta-sattwika-vikara*), they are-*dhumayita* (smoky), *jwallta* (having flames), *dipta* (giving light) and *sudipta* (well burnt). After attaining the fourth stage, the devotee can taste the third thought. *vyabhdcharibhava* in which the devotee behaves like a mad person, intoxicated in love for Krishna and is extremely anxious only for Him. The devotee experiences in this stage four different mental struggles. The first is termed as *Bhavotpatti* wherein the thought of Krishna is awakened, the second is *Bhavasandhi* wherein different thoughts are mixed up together, the third is *Bhavashavalya* therein thoughts are complicated and the fourth is *Bhavashanti* wherein the devotee is calm down. These four mental states are experienced when the devotee feels *Nirveda* (when disgusted himself) and *Vishada* (when despondency overcomes).

The eight stages for attaining these *Bhavas* are also described in detail. The first step is called *Rati* (attachment to Krishna), which is of three: is of three kinds; general interest or attachment to Krishna, delights in his amorous sports and pleases in his remembrance is called '*sadharani*' (common) *rati*, the second is '*samanjasa*' (reasonable) *rati*-a type of attachment accompanied with expectation of special grace, and the third is '*samartha*' (interest only) rati-the type of attachment having no expectation of grace. The first type of *rati* is found in the mentality of *kubja* of Mathura, the second type is found in those of celebrated wives of Shri Krishna in Dwarka and the third type is found in the *Gopis* of Vrindavana. Constant *rati* gives rise to *Prema* (love with tender regard) which has three types, such as '*proudh*' (mature), '*Madhya*' (moderate) and '*manda*' (inactive). The third stage is called *Sneha* (unctuousness, excessively friendly) towards Krishna) and is of two kinds – '*ghrita*' (clarified butter) and *madhu*' (honey). It is called honey consciousness or *madhusneha* when the devotee's approach is of independent type and *ghritasneha*, when it is dependent nature. Sneha gives rise to *Maan* (pique, resentment arising from hurt pride, vexation for getting more love) and has four kinds- '*dakshinyodatta*' (noble pique concerning a gift), '*vamyegandhodatta*' (noble pique concerning a lovely one's arrogance), '*Koutilyalalita*' (dallying with pretence) and '*marmalalita*' (dallying for amusement). The fifth stage in the *Ragaanuga* Bhakti is the *Pranava* (espousing, expression of feeling oneness with the beloved) and it has '*meitra*' (simply friendship) and '*sakhya*' (intimacy) sub divisions. The sixth stage is the *Raaga* (feeling, interest, dye) which has four kinds : '*neelee*' (dark-blue), '*shyama*' (black), '*kusumbha*' (saffron) and '*manjistha*' (Indian madder, permanent). The seventh one is *Anuraaga* (unchanged loyalty, devotional attachement or dye with permanent colour) which has four characteristics- (a) try by each to control the other, (b) infatuation, (c) feel the tendency of taking birth as inanimate things, and (d) delight without Him as if He is. The eight stage is known as *Mahaabhaava*. wherein there is nothing in the mind of the devotee except that of the beloved and thinking himself living with the beloved without a moment's separation. There are two types in '*mahabhava*'. One is '*rudh*' (developed) in which the devotee remains thinking about which would make Krishna annoyance, and the other is '*adhirudh*' (increased) in which there is no parlance to illustrate the joy of living with Krishna and the pain of living without Krishna. The latter has two forms. One is '*madana*' (excitement in the utmost degree when with Krishna) and the other is '*madana*' (excitement in the utmost degree at the time of separation). Shri Rupa Goswami has shown each stage and the subsequent divisions ana the essential characteristics with well known verses from several books and cannot be reproduced here. Only a brief information is given for reference.

A devotee following the '*ragatma*' system of Chaitanya has to follow the above steps after having a direct initiation from a bonafied

Guru. The neophyte will hava '*guru-pranalika*' (the list of the Gurus from Chaitanya to the direct Guru). [The necessity of *Guru-Pranalika* was first introduced in this system of '*ragitmika*' by Siddha Shri Jaya Krishnadas Babaji Maharaia of Vrindavana – Choudasi Krosh Vrajamandol, Imphal, 2004, page 213]

He has to attend *Sat-sangas* in order to accelerate the development of love for Krishna, has to conduct *Japa* (repeated utterance of Mantra or Name of Lord given by the Guru, using a rosary) has to bear symbols of the Lord in various parts of the body with earth (*tilaka*). [Manipuri Vaishnavas prefer black colour tilaka than the *Gopichandana* it is said in the scripture that black tilaka gives peace, *gopichandan* gives prosperity etc.], has to change his name into a name having the name of the Lord or of renown devotees ended with the word *Dasa* (servant) which will enable him conduct *Goura-Yoqa-Pitha* seva or simply *Sadhaka seva* and another name for the second step of service called as *Siddhi seva* which is concerned with the service to Kadha-Krishna in the *Vrindavana-Yoga-Pitha* seva, having a *Maniari* name (a group of Radha's intimate friends), in this stage the devotee has to identify himself/herself as a lady follower of the Girl-friend of Radha manifested as *Guru-rupa-sakhi* and there is no idea of man-hood of the devotee, in this manner the individual soul enters the realm of Radha-Krishna and is the goal of life, called *Nityaseva* (eternal service).

For a neophyte the stories of Gouranga, the sports of Shri Krishna, the essence of the teachings of the Vedas are to be read or listen from bonafied persons. *Chaitanya Charitamrita. Chaitanya Bhagavat, Shri Mad Bhagavattam. Bhagavat Gita* etc. are important books of studies. The eight teachings of Chaitanya are to be remembered always. The eight versus teach the devotees the greatness of the name of Shri Krishna, the interest in the name of Shri Krishna, the humbleness of the devotee while remembering Him, discarding prayer for personal gains, thining the world is useless without Krishna, to love Him without any reason and not to stop a any circumstances or conditions the love of the Lord. *Chaitanya Charitamrita* of Krishnadas Kaviraj describes it in detail.

From the above considerations it is evident that the Vaishnavism of Manipur includes all the best elements from many theologies. The Vaishnavas of Manipur believe in eternal service and not in the concept of union with the Lord, as suggested by Ramanuja. The identification of the devotee as servant of the servant, that is the humblest one. There is a high regard for moral and ethics, instances of which have been described by Krishnadas in his *Charitamrita* about the character of Chaitanya. The theory of Vaishnavism in Manipur allow its followers to conduct practice in their own homes and not in dense forests or deserted caves of the mountains. It advocates to go as pilgrims to noted and selected places particularly, Navadwipa, Vrindavana and Puri. Furthermore, the Vaishnavism of Manipur embraces some of the concepts of the traditional religion. In every house there is a scheduled place for '*Sanamahi*' (the family God) in the south-western corner. The Manipuri Vaishnavas give equal treatment to 'Sanamahi' and 'Gouranga' though the two belong to different religious sy-stems.

Vaishnavism in Manipur contains elements from *Tantra*. Tantra is a part and parcel of Vaishnavism and there are renown texts like the *Narada Pancharatra* which describes in detail about the philosophy of Tantra, the practical aspect of Yoga for concentration of mind and the techniques rituals which include the formation of icons and buildings of temples, and conduct religious worship and social practice. The three sects (the Vaishnava, the Shaiva and the Shakta) have all common bond of venerating of Goddess, the mother of the Universe. Now, for the Vaishnava sect, the *Vilkhanas Samhita* belong to the ascetics and the *Pancharatra samhitas* deal with the philosophy of cosmogony, greatly inspired by *Sankhya* and *Yoga* systems. There are treatises teaching magical and mystical formularies for the worship of the deities or the attainment of super human powers. In the Manipuri Vaishnavism construction of *Mandapa* for conducting *Sankirtana* at any courtyard is a well known one, for, here every religious functions are associated with 'sankirtana' of any kind. The Manipuris follow certain rules in constructing such temporary Mandapas. They follow strict rules in constructing the dwelling houses, the *Sangois* (houses constructed not for dwelling and for conducting religious functions and others), the cowsheds, the temples, sheds of any kind including the latrine, and even the shed at the court-yard for keeping a dead body for conducting a short rite. The doors, windows or any outlet of the house are arranged under a prescribed rule, the facing of the dwelling house is also to follow the prescribed rules and so on. These are the factors from Tantra. Moreover, we have seen many Manipuri people wearing small metal boxes containing magical words or figures or numerals written on special papers or barks (like *Bhojapatra*) which is supposed protecting the Dealer from possible dangers. This is also from Tantra. There are figures drawn on floors with flours before conducting worship and they are from Tantra. When a Manipuri Vaishnava goes out of the house, certain *Mantras* of sacred recitations, or particular gait are done as advised by the elders; when he has to sleep somewhere in an unknown place, a field or a jungle, he has to draw certain mental figures which is popularly known as '*Lamlandabi*', sleeping enclosed by such mental figures is supposed to have protected from any danger in that solitary place. Almost all the orthodox Manipuri Vaishanvas listen to the chanting of '*Gopalasahashra nama*' at regular intervals for the welfare of the family. To recite a *Kavacha* (a formula for protection) or to wear an amulet are regarded a must for a person going outside for any purpose. Such are unwritten principles of Manipuri Vaishnavas to be practised, and the elements are from Tantra.

The tools for practising Vaishnava theology are the '*Sankirtana*' and '*Pujah*'. For 'sankirtana' there are several volumes under the title 'Kirtana Vichara' of different editors or compilers. In all these books, though there are little differences here and there, it is said that the Sankirtana of Vaishnavas of Manipur is not random singing or emotional solo, but a well developed system of spiritual practice for quick evolution of the practitioner. Strict rules are to be followed while singing a '*raga*', while constructing a 'mandapa' and such other things relating to the 'sankirtana'. There must be a *Isheihanba* (the leading singer), a *Duhar* (the main assistant singed), a *Khonpangba* (the assistant to the main singer), two players of *Mridanga* (pung in Manipuri) and other assistant singers, collectively known as 'Pala; the number as described in the scripture is 36. [Chitreswar: Sankiratana Vichara, Imphal,1997, page 27], making a form of garland or rosary, and as if using a rosary while uttering the name of Lord, the '*pala*' will make a full round movement and its counter movement during the starting of *Mel* (a part of the sankirtana). There must have six doors, such as (i) the door of man, (ii) of god, (iii) of manes, (iv) of death, (v) of heavens and (vi) of nether world in a sankirtana. The voice (*shabda*). the bell (*kangshi*), the cymbal (*shen/kartal*), the mridanga (*pụng*) and the Conch (*Moibung*) are the five essentials of a *sankirtana*. '*Raga houba*' (invocation), '*Gourachandra*' (*Raga taba*), *Mel, Tanchap* and *Nityaipada* are the limbs of a *sankirtana.* The *Pheijom*(dhoti), *Khwangyet* (a cloth having a stitch at the centre of two equal parts), *Kokyet* (turban), *Dwadasha tilaka* (mark of chandana), sacred thread (six strands for *Kshetriya* and nine for *Brahmanas*), *Tulasi mala* (three rounds at the neck) and a garland, *nirmalya* (flower offered to the Lord) and anklets etc. are the essential eight dresses of a pala or a singer in a Sankirtana. The turban of the *pungyeiba* (mridanga player) is different from those of the singers. The aim and object of performing a sankirtana is to have *Tinabanchha* (or three desires) fulfilled. The three are (i) *Madhurya* (the exquisite beauty of Krishna which Krishna himself could not experienced), (ii) *Prema* (the love of Krishna with tender regard, the enjoyment of love of Himself on the *madhurya.* He had, could not be experienced by Him) and (iii) *Sukha* (satisfaction with bliss experienced from offering the *prema* to the *madhurya* of Krishna by Himself could not have by Krishna).

These three were experienced by Radharani alone and hence, Shri Krishna took another incarnation with Radharani in one body called, Chaitanya, and Krishna in the form of Chaitanya could experience the three desires through *sankirtana.* If Chaitanya is Radha and Krishna in one form, and if *Sankirtana* is a means for experiencing the three desires of the Lord, then the place where sankirtana is performed cannot be a simple worldly place, and would be rather a divine place; the audience would be rather divine personalities in human forms and so on the performance of *sankirtana* cannot be regarded as a simple thing, in this respect the books on sankirtana describe in detail divisions and sub-division, representing divine personalities and their glories, '*mantras*' to be recited, thoughts to be exercised on the instru-ments and others.

Besides the formal *sankirtana,* there are important agents with whom practice of Vaishnava theory are carried out by the people. The '*Lairik-thiba-haiba,* the '*wari liba*', the Bhagavat- or Gita' readers and such others are educating the people on vaishnavism. The persons who are arranging far any private or public function, called as '*arangphm*' (arranger) are the important persons without whom the so called festivals could not be observed successfully.

The other tool is the *pujah*(worship), which are practised by the Brahmans in general. There are differences in performing worships or conducting ceremonies, but that does not matter much to the people, for they simply think that whatever has done had already seen by the Almighty and that any wrong done by the Brahmans would be responsible by themselves.

The *Rasdhari* (teachers or directors of world famed *Rasa* dance and others like *Shanshenba. Gouralila* and others are also tools for propagating vaishnavism to the people in an informal way. The love of Krishna that can be had by studying for a long time on the epics or the scriptures can be easily attained by enjoying the dance drama of different names, *Rasa lila* and others for a short time.

The *Mandirs* with *mandapa* at every lane in the villages and towns of Manipur valley(perhaps the best distribution of religious centres in the world) are the important centres for propagating Vaishnavism to the people. The sound of the gongs spread from these Mandirs in the morning and evening always remind the people around these temples that they are *vaishnavas* and at the same time the people feel themselves graced by the Lord through the sound of the gongs and bells. The Govindaji temple at the heart of the capital town is following the system of '*astakal seva*' (services at eight periods) in a day. The periods are *Pratah* (dawn), *Purvanh* (morning), *Madhyanh* (noon), *Aparanh* (after noon), *Sayang* (evening), Pradeosha (dusk), *Nakta* (night), and *Nishanta* (dead of night) and appropriate services are offered to Govindaji. The sound of the gong of Govindaji at the time of *Manglarti* (service before dawn) is indeed an inspiring one to the vaishnavas.

Practice of Vaishnavism: The Manipuri Vaishnavas practise Vaishaavism in their daily life. The tenfold act of refining(*das sanskaras*) are almost all observed individually, besides the rites relating to the departed souls (*Sraddha, Firoi, Tarpana*). The *Dol Yatra*, the *Ratha Yatra*, the *Durga Pujah, Krishna Janma*, and host of others are observed socially in the Mandapas or selected places. Listening of stories from '*Wari Liba*', '*Lairik-thiba-haiba*', 'Gita or Bhagavatta readers' or '*Mandaleshwars*' are also arranged at these Mandapas or other suitable places besides having '*Basaka*' (a kind of *sankirtana*) of male and female singers, *Rasa lila, Goura lila, Shanshenba* and others. It is notable that there is no month without religious functions.

In almost all the individual and social religious functions *sankirtana* is regarded as a must. The Vaishnava of Manipur gives more emphasis on *sankirtana* than the actual rites, *Yajna* (sacrifice) or *Shraddha* (rites for departed soul). Before starting a Rasa dance, *sankirtana* is performed. The '*Sankirtana Vichara*' tells us many things about its glory, the divine personalities in the singers, *mridanga* players, the audience, the *arangpham* etc. and it is a matter of discussion among the Vaishnavas of Manipur. Thus, *sankirtna* is an important part for the practice of Vaishnavism in Manipur.

Regarding *Rasa Lila*, a little about it is considered necessary to discuss here. There are five kinds of *Rasa*. They are- (i) *Maharasa*, to be played on the full-moon day of *Hiyangei* (November) month, (ii) *Kunjarasa*, to be played on the full-moon day of *Mera* (October) month, (iii) *Vasanta Rasa*, to be played on the full-moon day of *Shajibu* (April) month, (iv) *Nitya* or *Nartta Rasa*. to be played anywhere anytime and (v) *Dibarasa*. introduced by Shri Chudachand Maharaja of Manipur on the suggestion of Guru Amubi. The last one is played with *Sari* dress and the theme is drawn from the *Bhajan Lila* on *Thakur Mahasay*. (Encyclopaedia of North-East, India Vol. II Page 107-10). Actually '*rasa*' is not a play to be shown but a process of meditation on the sports of the Lord in the form of Krishna with His eternal Powers or *Shaktis* manifested as Gopis in human forms. The *Rasa Mandala* (the stage where the dance is shown) is strictly restricted from entering by any-body except the dancers, and is mentally regarded as the visible Vrindavana. Among the five kinds of Rasa, '*aber khel*' (spraying of coloured water and powder), appearance of *Chandravali* are found in the '*Vasanta Rasa*' only. The notable form of dance include *Pareng* (series) which are performed at the beginning of the dance. The common among them are '*Vrindavana Pareng*', '*Khurumba Pareng*', '*Bhangi Pareng*' etc. which are classical composition of different gurus. There are *Chali* (steps), *Uplei, Longlei*, soft and effortless movements in these forms of Rasa, and the *Rasadhari* (director of the dance) has the right to edit the entire dances to suit the performance. [Ency. North East, Vol. III P. 109-10].

The boys, girls and anybody who are taking the roles of Krishna, Radha, Gouranga, Nityananda and others are considered as divine manifestations during the plays. They are cautiously fed and attended to during the time of training also. Vaishnavas prostrate before them with tears in the eyes as if they have seen the Lords through the actors, who are not professionals. The supporting roles of the plays are acted by professionals.

The sankirtanists, the Brahmans(who perform worship or cook food for God and Vaishnavas), the professionals(who assist the plays), the Conch blowers, the *Arangphams* and such other agents of practical Vaishnavism are not paid servants, but they are offered *Dakshina* (charity in cash or kind) by the person who engaged then to perform the religious functions. The Manipuris maintain uniformity in dresses for different occassions, marriage, *Shraddha*, so on. The Vaishnavas of Manipur, though not so scholarly in character, yet are practising the highest form of devotion, called the '*ahei-tuki*' (without reason). They understand that 'Religion is not a matter of discussion on the table but is faith for knowing and worshiping God' [Swami Sivannnda: Bhakti and Sankirtana, Uttar Pradesh, 1934, page 43]. They practise 'Prema Yoga' which advise to educate the eyes see God in all faces, to behold the Divine Form in all beings. They prostrate before the sankirtanists as and when emotion in them arise for the love of Krishna, during the course of the song. The weeping Vaishnavas are not all scholars.

The Manipuris take much care on their health and cleanliness, and always try to maintain it. The principle of high thinking and simple living is practised well. They follow the maxim-'Cleanliness is next to godliness' as great men referred to frequently.

The scriptures advise not to wash the sacred thread [Swami Yogendrananda Giri: Karmagi Laṃbi, Imphal, 1986, page], but the Manipuri vaishnavas are washing it daily, and anybody who wears dirty sacred thread and *Tulasi mala* is looked down upon. Anybody who is participating a religious function has to bear *tilaka* marks, well shaved face, well cut head and white *dhoty* with white *chadars*.

The concept of holy and unholy in all undertakings are strictly maintained. During the time of Kings, it was sternly looked after by the elders, the Brahmans and the King, but with the modernisation of Manipuri society, many religious restrictions are neglected to-day. It is said that the clothes used in the market were not used inside the house without washing them. At present, the power and function of the '*Brahma Sabha*' is no more so influential, the religious functions including those of departed souls are becoming nominal, the performances of the sankirtanists, the *pujah* of the *Brahmans*, the services of the artistic *arangphams*, the assisting trained professional of divine dances are all becoming more commercial than spiritual.

In Manipur, in the present situation, two types of rites for departed souls are conducted. One is the vedic system of *Pinda dana* (offering of rice ball etc) and the other is *Vairagva* (offering something to Gouranga without *Pinda*). The system of Vairagya was considered for men having no sons or grandsons before two or three decades. The Manipuris considered that the service rendered by the son for his departed parent, for about ten or twelve days sleeping on ground, having one meal a day and offering rice ball must be regarded as duty. But, nowadays, the sons do not want to spare those days of suffering. The sons and daughters think that arranging a good Sankirtana, distributing tasty food and offering reasonably large *dakshina* are the best services that they can do for those departed souls. Moreover, there is given less importance in spiritual aspect, neglecting scriptural advice for doing or not doing, for fasting, for penance, for holy and un-holy concepts. for *Nityachara* (daily obligations), for daily five sacrifice('*pancha maha Yajna*), for *sanahyas and tarpana* (meditations during morning, noon and evening, *anna* offering for the manes) etc. which are indespensable duties of a Hindu or a Vaishnava. However this is not the problem of the Manipuri Vaishnavas only. The ever increasing information technology, the knowledge exploration and the exchange of culture and thoughts among the inhabitants of this planet will be responsible for such condition.

Impact of Vaishnavism on Music, Dance and Literature: The Manipuris had their own music, dance and literature before introducing Vaishnavism. It is a well known fact that when a new system of religion is introduced into a well organised society having its own system, a blended form of culture comes out. The reason of uniqueness in the theology of Vaishnavism in Manipur is the amalgamation of the two special cultures into one.

Regarding music, dance and song in Manipur. It is said that three persons, Yadava Das, Gouri Das and Devi Das who were accompanied with Bhavani Natha, the Brahman, sang song of *Arati* (a praise to the Diety during the light offering) during King *Khagemba*(1597-1652) at the Vishnu pujah. [Nata Sankirtana-page10]. *Ariba Pala* (old group of singers) was named in the time of King Charairongba, which is the first form of Manipuri Vaishnava Sankirtana(1697-09) and the *Nata*

Sankirtana was remodelled on pure Manipuri style by Khundrakpam *Damu* and Pukhrambam *Selung* on the order of Rajarshi Bhaigyachandra Maharaja. Sinam *Rasikananda* contributed much in the Nata sankirtana, Akham *Rasananda* founded styles of singing in the Rasa, Ngangbam *Ngangmala* founded ten styles of singing of the '*Jhulon*' (a kind of sports of Radha-Krishna) ceremoney, Chingakham *Ṣwarupananda* created '*Vasaka pareng*' and '*Bhangi Pareng*' of the Rasa dance, Ayekpam *Leipakmacha* endowed 'sixty four rasas' and thus, so many gurus added something to the *Nata sankirtana*, Rasa Dance and other religious activities at different stages and after describing the procedures in detail, Shri A Chitreswor Sharma concluded in his book, '*Sankirtana Vichara*' (1988) with the line, 'the amalgamated form of Meitei religion and Hindu religion came into practice in Manipur' (pages- 2,3) and this shows that the Nata Sankirtana, the Rasa dance and other such kind are not purely the products of the imported religion.

After King Charairongba adopted Vaishnavism, the marked change in the names of Manipuris is seen, it is said, 'Since the time of that King the suffix *Singh* was added to the original Meitei name and perhaps *Devi* too for the women' [Ch. Manihar: Vaishnavism in Manipur- concept and Practice, M.U., 2004, Seminar paper, page 1]. During the reign of Garibaniwaj Maharaja, the concept of Manipuri kings as the decendents of *Arjuna* of Mahabharata was introduced and chronicle '*Vijaya Panchali*' was written. In the book, *Ariba Manipuri Sahityagi Paring*, vols.I and II' of L.Ashokkumar, there is a series of books described in detail and it can be understood that books written before 18th century were not bearing names of authors and dates of publications. Books after this century bear the name and date of publications. In these books foreign words of Bengali and Sanskrit are used in abundance.

Many books were translated into Manipuri and many were written on and about Hinduism by Manipuri scholars. The names of the pioneers in this regard may include Angom Gopi, Madhavaram Wahengba, Gopirarna, Laishram Aroi, Yumnam Atibar, Mayengbam Vrindavan, Nun- gangbam Govindaram, Labanga *Konthoujamba*, Navananda Yuvaraj, Sridam Keisamcha, Kshema Singh, Pramananda, Mukundaram, Lakshmi Narayan, Ramcharan etc. The books translated include *Lakshmicharita, Dhruvacharita. Ram nongaba* and others, and books written include *Chingthangkhomba Ganga chatpa*, *Langlon, Takhel ngamba* and others. There were books inclined to Buddhism, for instance, *Arong Nandakumar, Sanamanik, Dhananjoy Laibu Ningba* etc.

The influence of Hinduism to the *Maibas* or *Veidyas* who are using *tantric mantras* called '*laiwas*' is very clear. The '*laiwas*' which are forcefully uttered by *Maibas* for curing pains or for causing divorce between the beloved couples, or for giving any kind of suffering, insane or pains of any type include Sanskrit words like '*Klim*', '*Aum*', '*Hang*', '*Shling*', '*Shring*' and alike.

The books written or translated are all the precious possession of the Manipuri literature. The works of Haodeijamba Chatanya and other pioneers are precious books. The works of Panditraj Atombapu Sharma are noteworthy for Manipuri Vaishnavas and also help much to the common Brahmans of Manipur in conducting pujahs and understanding important Puranas. We cannot ignore the works of Kalachand Shastri for his translation of the greatest book, the *Mahabharata.* There are eminent scholars who had contributed for the development and spreading of Knowledge of Hinduism and Vaishnavism.

With the adoption of Hinduism, paintings of various figures describing the tortures in the Hell on the persons who had committed crimes and prohibited actions, were introduced to display on the walls of important public places. Paintings describing the life history of Krishna or Gouranga, selecting important events, are also displayed at *Mandapas* and *Ṣangois.* The dressing style of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses are of purely Manipuri style. In short, the presentation of *Sankirtana, Rasa lila*, playing of mridanga, blowing of conch, style of *Ratha yatra*, systems of other Hindu festivals, the *Mandila pala* of the women, the *vasaKa*, the *Dḥumel*, the *Holi pala*, the Manoharshai, the *Khubak Ishei* and other religious observations bear a distinctive taste of the Manipuris, much different from those presented in Vrindavana, Navadwipa, or Puri where from the religion actually came to Manipur.

Gleanings: The following are notable points in the theory and practice of Vaishnavism in Manipur-

(i) Many important, valuable and practicable elements from the six systems of thought of the Hindu Philosophy are included in the theory of Manipuri Vaishnavism.

(ii) The distinctive practices of the *ism* is because of remodelling the theoretical principles on scientific approach, for example, cleanliness is regarded more important than the suprstituous and irrational prohibitions. Remodelling is done to suit the system of the changing society without affecting the core teaching of the original theory.

(iii) There is an instinct among the Manipuris in general that no one is inferior to anybody. And this instinct makes the people to arrange uniform dress reserved for religious and public functions.

(iv) The Manipuris are skilled in all undertakings. The people support the professionals with regard and possible help. A good sankirtanist is highly honoured in the Manipuri Society, and also to such other persons.

(v) Mixing of culture, of thought and of social performances is also an important factor for its distinctive nature.

Conclusion: Generally the Vaisnnavas of Manipur are emotional in the service of the Deity and are very brave in challenging the wrong views of others. Instances are found during the reign of Rajarshi Bhaigyachandra and of Gambhir Singh Mahaaraja who could install the Deity of Nabadwipachandra in Nabadwipa and who could observe the *Ratha Yatra* compelling the Musalmans to observe their religious function after that of the Hindus inspite of the inclination of the ruling Britishers. The Vaishnavas of Manipur try to maintain the attitude of servitude to Radha-Kṛishna but not to the other fellow beings. King Pamheiba, Bhagyachandra Maharaja, Gambhir Singh Maharaja were not weak kings of Manipur. Moreover, the Vaishnava theory reminds us the oneness of mankind and teaches the human beings to practise the '*Prema Bhakti*' which is the greatest gift of God to mankind, it is love that units, and not hate. Vaishnavism teaches us to love everybody as the one Absolute and it is the essential idea of integration of all. The world to-day is in great need of this idea.

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Impact of Vaishnavism on the Performing Arts of Manipur

The coming of Vaishnavism to Manipur on the eastern frontier of India and bordering on south-east Asia had a very great import. It greatly improved all performing arts, all visual arts, language and literature, coinage and indeed the whole way of life. In this paper, we will leave out the impact on language and literature, coinage and the visual arts i.e. painting, sculpture, architecture and the like. We will confine our attention to performing arts only. By performing arts, we mean music, dance, drama including *shumang leela*, opera, story-telling and recital of scriptures with musical note.

COMING OF VAISHNAVISM

Vaishnavism began in Manipur in 1470 A.D., sixteen years before the birth of Chaitanya. He was not the founder of Vaishnavism which existed long before him in different parts of India. But on account of the location of Manipur of the eastern frontier of India, the existence of densely forested hills between the Gangetic Valley and the Manipur Valley and the slow means of communication in ancient and medieval times, Vaishnavism could not rise in the Manipur Valley prior to the 15th century. It is also a fact that Indian thought and ways of life including the belief in Vishnu as the Supreme Being did spread to Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, Thailand, Laos and other regions of South-east Aisa. In Thailand and the Tai-speaking regions of Burma, Vishnu is called Phra Vishnu. In the language of the Tais, a people called the Shans by the Burmese, *Phra* means God Almighty, *phri* means *god* and *phi* means *spirit.* The kingdom of Pong with which Manipur had a long and intimate friend-ship was a Tai kingdom. The Tais were acquainted with the concept of Vishnu as the Supreme Being.

In 1470 AD., Manipur and the kingdom of Pong invaded the Kabaw Valley, conquered it an shared it between themselves. The kingdom of Pong was in Upper Burma with its capital at Nogaung (latitude 25°17′N, longitude 96°65′E) on a tritunity of the Irrawady. In the course of celebrating their victory over the Khrelap Shans of the Kabaw Valley, the king of Pong presented an image of Phra Vishnu to the king of Manipur. The name of the Manipuri king is recorded in the Royal Chronicle as Kyamba. But this is the reign-name of the Manipuri king meaning the Conqueror of Kyang. What was his personal names? A genealogy of the kings of Manipur shows his Sanskrit name as Muktabali which means an offering of pearls. After returning from the Kabaw Valley, Kyamba showed the image or Pura Vishnu to Some Brahmins for identification. The Brahmins identified the image as the image of Vishnu. It may be mentioned here that some Brahmins, mostly from Bengal, had already settled permanently in the Manipur Valley. By the end of the 12th century, Muslim conquest of North India was an accomplished fact. Some enterprising Brahmins who found that worship of Hindu gods and goddesses according to Hindu rites were not very convenient under Muslim rule migrated to Manipur and other places not under Muslim rule.

With the identification of the image from the Tai kingdom of Pong as the image of Vishnu, the worship of Phra Vishnu began in the capital of Manipur. We have seen above that in the Tai language *phra* means God Almighty. Since there is one and only one God Almighty, Vishnu was also simply called *Phra.* With the beginning of the worship of Vishnu in Manipur, the Tai word *phra* came as a loan-word to Manipuri. But it under-went a slight change in pronunciation. Tai is a monosyllabic language. But Manipur is not. It has words of two or more syllables. So *phra* became *phura* in Manipur according to the speech habits of the Manipuris. So the descendants of the Brahmin who first worshipped *Phra* (i.e. Vishnu) came to be known *Phuralatpams* i.e. descendants of the worshipper of *Phura.* Now they are called *Phurailatpams.*

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

The year 1470 A.D. is a very important watershed in the cultural life of the Manipuris. Before 1470 also, the Manipuris worshipped gods and a few goddesses. But it was all uniconic i.e. the worship was without any icon. The Manipuris worshipped Fire, the Sun, the Sky, the king of gods, the god of the homestead and the god of death. No image of the gods was thought necessary. A piece of cloth was spread at the time of the invocation and the worshippers imagined that the god invoked had come and occupied the seat offered. Prayers were there and perhaps some sacrifice. Boons were asked. No temple was built.

The worship was held in the grove sacred to the god or goddess concerned. It is to be seen that this mode of worship was essentially Vedic. In the Vedic age there was no image worship. Nor were there temples. It will also be seen that Fire was called Agni in the Vedic age. The ancient and medieval Manipuris called him *Khaambi.* The sun was called *Savitri* by the Rig Vedic Aryans. Later on he was called *Savi.* The ancient Manipuris called him *Thabi.* The Rig Vedic Aryans called the Sky *Dyaus.* The ancient Manipuris called him *Atiya.* According to the Rig Vedic Aryans, the king of gods called Indra by them, was also the god of rain and his weapon was the thunderbolt. According to the ancient Greeks, the king of gods called Zeus by them was also the god of rain and his weapon was the thunderbolt. According to the ancient Romans, Jupiter, the king of gods, was also the god of rain and his weapon was the thunderbolt. The ancient Manipuris called their kind of gods *Soraren* and he was also the god of rain. His weapon was the thunderbolt. The Rig Vedic Aryans believed in a god of homestead and household. He was called Vastoshpati, The Manipuris believed and still believe in a god of the household. He is called Sanamahi now.

With the coming of Vishnu worship, image worship was first introduced into Manipur and it came to stay. With the coming of image worship, a building to keep the image became necessary. In this way, the building of temples began in Manipur. What is more important was the introduction of waving of lights called *araati* to the accompanimeny of singing—a rudimentary form of *kirtan.* Tradition has it that with the coming of Vishnu worship *kirtans* were sung by the

Kirtaniyas. Before the singing of *kirtans,* songs were no doubt sung in Manipur but they were sung in a different tune. Now the *kirtans* were sung in the tunes prevalent in Bengal or Eastern Bengal to be more precise. These tunes were quite different from the tunes prevalent in the Manipur Valley before 1470 A.D. This was the impact of Vaishnavism on music felt, for the first time.

NEXT STAGE

The next stage in the impact of Vaishnavism on music was when a form of *kirtan* called *Bangdesh* came to Manipur. "Bagdesh" is a corruption of Banga Desh i.e. Eastern Bengal now called Bangladesh. This type of kirtan was introduced into Manipur from there. When it was introduced is not yet clear. Some scholars are of the view that it was in the reign of Pitambar Charai Rogba (1698-1709) while some others suggest that it was in the reign of Khagemba (1597-1652). In this type of kirtan, there is the portion called *raga* followed by what is now called *Gour Chandrika* which in its turn followed by what is now called *Niti Leela.* The singers use a kind of cymbal which is neither a *Jhaal* no *kartal.* The type of drum called in Manipur *pung* used in Bangdesh is somewhat old-fashioned. Bangdesh is not popular now. But in the early half or the 18th century, it must have caught the imagination of the people. Otherwise it would not survive to this day.

This stage or the impact was followed by another and a greater impact the coming of *nata sankeertan.* Ramanandi form of Vaishnavism was short-lived in Manipur. Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz's grandson Gour Shyam reverted to Chaitany's school of Vaishnavism.

NATA SANKEERTANAM

Gour Shyam's younger brother Jai Sing, affectionately known to Vaishnavite circles as Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra, came to the throne in 1759 A.D. But it was in his second reign (1763-1798) that Vaishnavism made a very great impact on the music of Manipur. This impact came in the form of *nata sankeertan.* This is a very well developed type of music. First there is the *raga* followed by *guru* *vandana* (obeisance to preceptor) and *Vaishnava vandana* (obeisance to Vaishnavas). This in its turn is followed by *Gour Chandrika* (obeisance to Chai-*leela* (singing of the life and glory of Radha and Krishna). This is followed by *prathana* (prayer) which is in its turn followed by *Nityai pada* (lines in glory of Nityananda who helped Chaitanya very much in the propagation of Vaishnavism). The penultimate part is called *Chhai Gosai* (the six Goswamees i.e. obeisance to the Six Goswamees of Vrindavan). The six goswamees are Rupa, Sanatana, Shree Jeeva, Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Das and Raghunath Bhatta. If the musical performance is organized on a large scale and if the audience is good, two more *goswamees* viz. Lokanath and Shree Nivaas are added. The last part is *Jai Bhai* urging the bretheren to always remember the name of God.

The cymbal used in *nata sankeertan* is called *kartal.* Its sound is more melodious than that of the cymbal used in Bangladesh. The drum called *pung* used in *nata sankeertan* is slightly different from that used in Bangdesh and produces a more pleasant sound. At the beginning of the music in *nata sankeertan,* there is playing of conches. During the course of the *nata sankeertan* music, the two drum-beaters called *pungyeiba* give recital of intricate *taals* accompanied movements of the body called "*Pung cholom*".

From about the middle of the 18th century, *nata sankeertan* music became very popular and all other kinds of Manipuri music were overshadowed by it.

FURTHER ADVANCEMENT

The second reign of Chandra Keerti (1850-1886) saw further advancement of *nata sankeertan music.* In this type of music, there are 6 principal *ragas.* Each of them is called a *raga purusha.* Each *ranga purusha* has 6 wives called *raaginees* or female *raagas.* For example, Shree Raaga which confers auspciousness has six *raaginees* vis. Gaandhaaree, Subhagaa, Gouree, Kaumaarac, Belaawaaree, and Vairaagees. In the reign of Chandra Keerti, the Manipuri *nata sankeertan* went much further. Each of the six *raga purusha* had now six attendants called *daasa raagas* or servant raagas. And each of the servant raagas had 6 wives. Thus the number of raagas and raaginees was now legion. A book on music called *Krisha Rasa Sangeet Sangraha* compiled in the reign of Chandra Keerti makes all this clear. The book is in Sanskrit. Its Manipuri translation is now available.

Upto the reign of Kula Chandra (September 1890-April 1891), *naata sankeertan* music attracted the best talents among the Manipuris and even high officials of the state took pride in associating themselves *nata sankeertan* performances. Even the kings of Manipur occasionally took part in singing *nata sankeertan*,

MANOHAR SHAHI

Another form of music, viz. *Manoharsai* was introduced into Manipur in the reign of Chandra Keerti. It is a type of keertan music to worship God. The principal musical instruments are a type of cymbal called *Ram kartal* and a type of drum called *khol.* Nanoharshani music is very sweet. It spread from the Manohar Shahi Paragana of Rajshahi district of undivided Bengal. We have mentioned Lokanath Goswamee above. He was a class mate of Chaitanya whose disciple he became. Lokanath Goswamee's only disciple was Narottam Goswamee. It was Narottam Goswamee who pupularised *manoharshahi.* It was through his efforts that it became the principal mode of *keertan.* Tradition has it that Chandra Keerti sent some Manipuri singers to "*Nabadeep* to get training in manoharshai. In Manipur, however, *nata sankeertan* remined more popular than *manoharshahi.*

DHOP MUSIC

Another kind of music viz *dhop* was introduced into Manipur from Bengal This type of music is intermediate between *nata sankeertan* and manoharshahi. In *dhop,* there is no formal beginning with a *raga.* In that it partakes of the nature of manoharshahi wherein also there is no elaborate *raga.* Unlike manoharshahi, *dhop* used Manipur *pung* and another type of cymbal called *jhaal.* In Bengali *dhop* means pastrol song. But in Manipur, *dhop* singers sing of the glory of Chaitanya and not pastoral songs. The tune of a dhop song is also intermediate between the tunes of *Nata Sankeertan* and Manoharshahi.

It is not certain when *dhop* was introduced into Manipur. But it became popular in the reign of Chudachand Singh (1891-1941). It was heard upto about the seventies of the 20th century. But as the songs were in Bengali and as those who know Bengali are now not many, this type of song is not heard nowadays. In this, type of music, the principal singer (*ishei hanba*), his assistant (*khomangba*) and the *dohar* wore a type of a long, flowing shirt looking like a gown. It was the type of shirts put on by *nawabs* of Bengal in medieval times. There was no button. The shirt was held in position by tying knots near the left under arm. This kind of shirt was called *Bagal bandhi* in Manipur.

OTHER TYPES OF MUSIC

With the coming of Vaishnavism, some other types of music also came into existence in Manipur. One such type is music sung in spring to the accompaniment of *ram kartal* and *dhola*. In *holi* music, there are four persons playing *dholak* upto the reign of Maharaja Chudachand, *holi* singers drew their songs liberally from *Pada Kalpataru*, an inexhaustible store of Vaishnava padavali. Two other types are Jayadev and *Khubagishei*. Some of the songs in Jayadeva are from the Sanskrit poems in *Geetgovinda* of Jayadeva, a Vaishnava poet who flourished in the court of Lakshman Sen of Bengali towards the end of the 12th century. Hence the name Jayadeva of this type of songs. *Khubagishei* sung during the *Rath Yatra* festival lasting about 10 days is of two different styles—one sung by male, artists and the other by female artists. These two tunes are quite different. The tune of the male artists is marked by the grandeur and majesty of the male voice while that of female artists is delicate and sweet characteristic of the female voice.

DANCE PERFORMANCE

The coming of Vaishnavism gave a marvelous impetus to Manipuri dance. Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra founded the image of Govinda and the *abhishek* of the image was held at Kanchipur on the 11th day of Hiyangei (about November) 1779 A.D. On that occasion Maharas was performed for the first time. It was this saintly king, who had viewed the *ras leela* of Lord Krishna in his dream, composed the Maha

Ras with the help of scholars versed in the Bhagavata. The *Maha Ras* was performed for 5 consecutive night upto *Kartiki Purnima.* Since then, the kings of Manipur performed the *Maha Ras* on the *Kartiki Purnima* every year. At present the Govindajee Temple Board is performing this Ras regularly on the night of Kartiki Purnima every year.

Maharas is based on five chapters viz. Chapter 29 to Chapter 33 of Book Ten of the *Bhagavata*—the most sacred and the most authoritative of the scriptures of Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism. Every part of Maha Ras is based on one or other *sloka* of the five chapters mentioned above, which are collectively known as *Ras Pancha Adhyai.*

There are 4 other types of *Ras.* They are *Vasanta Ras, Kunja Ras, Nata Ras* and *Diva Ras.* Vasanta Ras is performed at the temple of Govindajee on Vasanta Purnima, the fullmoon of spring which falls on the full moor of sajibhoo. This Ras is based on *Geet Govinda* of Jayadeva, the poet we have mentioned before. Kunja Ras is of minor importance. It was formulated by Sura Chandra and held on the fullmoon of *Mera* to satisfy a minority interpretation of the expression 'full moon of autumn'. According to the *Bhagavat,* Krishna played the *ras leela* with the milkmaids of Vrindavan on the fullmoon of autumn. But two months form the season called autumn. So the question was: Does 'the fullmoon of autumn' referred to in the Bhagvat fall on the fullmoon of Mera or the fullmoon of *Hiyangei*? The majority view was that it fell on the fullmoon of *Hiyangei.* But there was a minority view which held that it fell on the fullmoon of *Mera.* To respect the majority view, Bhagya Chandra performed the *Maha Ras* of the fullmoon of *Hiyangei.* But to accommodate the minority view also, a Ras named *Kunja* Ras was held on the fullmoon of *Mera.* What has been said above is the view of Pundit Atombapu Sharma. But we think that Bhagya Chandra had another reason from the practical point of view for holding the *Maha Ras* on the fullmoon of *Hityange.* The south-west monsoon withdraws from Manipur by the 15th October every year. Since the Manipuri year is luni-solar, there is the great possibility of a high flood occurring on the fullmoon of *Mera.* But there is no such danger on the fullmoon of *Hiyangei. Nata Ras* was formulated by Maharajah Chandra Keerti in the second hel of the 19th century. It depicts the love of Krishna for Radha but is not based on any particular scripture. *Diva Ras* was formulated in the reign of Maharajah Chudachand.

DRAMA, SHUMANG LEELA AND OPERA

The impact of Vaishnavism on Manipuri drama, *shumang leela* and opera is equally great. We may even say that the growth of these forms of performing arts is greatly due to Vaishnavism. With the coming of Vaishnavism, some operas came into existence in Manipur. One such opera is *Shanjenba* meaning 'tending the cows'. i.e. tending of cows by Krishna with Balaram an other cowherd boys. It is mentioned for the first time in the Royal Chronicle in the reign of Madhu Chandra. Another opera is *Kaliya Daman.* This opera was performed in 1835 on the waters of a canal at Kanchipur in the first reign of Chandra Keerti while the capital of Manipur was at Kanchipur. It was performed again in 1845 in Imphal in the reign of Nara Singh (1844-1850). Besides these two occasions of its performance recorded in the Royal Chronicle, it must have been performed by private individuals also many times. In the 20th century, there were many operas like *Gour Leela, Udukhol, Pash Khela, Maan Bhanjan, Nouka Vilas* and the like.

It is probable that *Shumang Leela* originated in the desire of the Manipuris to laugh together in an organized way. In her *My Three Years In Manipur* Mrs. E. Grimwood speaks of a performance which looks like a *Shumang Leela* of secular nature. In the early part of the reign of Chudachand, we hear of *Yotshubi Phaagee* and *Panganba Phaagee.* These were performed by organized *leela* parties. There was another *leela* party called *Chengba Phaagee.* But there were also other *leela* parties such as *Harischandra, Chandras* and *Chandrajini.* Harischandra depicted the story of King Hrischandra of the *Ramayana* fame. The story of *Chandrajini* is from the Manipuri version of the *Ramayana.* It was narrated by a minister of Ravana to Angada when the latter went to the court of Ravana. The story of *Chandrahas* is from Jaimini's version of the *Ashwamedha,* Parva of the *Mahabharata.* Thus Vaishnavism had a good impact on the growth of *Shumang Leela.*

Let us come to drama. This form of the performing art was introduced into Manipur by the Bengalis who learnt it from the

British. They founded a theatre at Babupara in Imphal at the turn of the 20th century. It was named Bama Charan Mukhopadhya1 Bandhava Natya Shala. Some Manipuris also took part in the theatrical performances. Later, the Manipuris themselves staged plays first in Bengali and afterwards in Manipuri. The religious sentiment was very strong in the Manipuri society at this time. Therefore most of the Manipuri plays of this time were from incidents in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* These two epics are parts of Vaishnavite literature. Some of the names of the plays of this period are *Ram Leela, Sita Vanavas, Karnarjun, Sabha Parva* and *Partha Parajay.* These are all Vaishnavite themes. Even in mythology-plays like *Savitri Satyavan,* the indirect influence of Vaishnavism is there; because the story of Savitri and Satyavan is from the Mahabharat.

Even when social plays came into existence on account of the plays of Lalit Singh, the influence of Vaishnavism is very much there. Thus in *Areppa Marup,* teacher Vedan Singh sings *Harigee Ningthi-ba phajaba koloi.* In *Sati Khongnang,* Kaboklei has a nightmare. She may die because of that. But the evil spirit who torments her with the night mare releases hey saying that before she fell asleep, she muttered 'Guru Krishna Vaishnava'. This is a clear influence of Vaishnavism. Later on, plays based on historical and folk themes became prominent. But the impact of Vaishnavism is there.

STORY-TELLING AND RECITING SCRIPTURE

By story-telling, we mean what is called *Wari-leela.* The stories told by these professional story-tellers were all from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* It is only in very recent times that non-Vaishanavite stories are also told. According to tradition, it was Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra who introduced story-telling as an art form. He brought a certain Brahmin from Assam. The Brahmin settled in Manipur and his descendants became Manipuris. According to tradition, it was this Brahmin who founded in Manipuri the art of telling stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.*

The *Ramayana* has many recensions in different parts of India. Some of them are the *Tulasi Ramayana* in North India, *Kambhan Ramayana* in South India and *Kirtibasi Ramayana* in Bengal. The *Mahabharata,* likewise, has many recensions. One recension is

Kasidasi Mahabharat of Bengal. What is popular in Manipur is not *Valmiki Ramayana* but *Kirtibasi Ramayana.* Likewise, what is popular in Manipur is not Veda Vyasa's Mahabharata but Kasi Ram's recension. There have been extensive interpolations in *kirtivasi Ramayana* both by Vaishnava scholars and *Shakta* scholars. The episode of Tarani Sen and the depiction of Ravana as a devotee of Rama are Vaishnava interpolations. Likewise, *Kasidasi Mahabharat* is more suitable for a Vishnavite society. This is the reason why *Kirtibasi Ramayana* and *Kasidasi Mahabharat* are more popular than their originals. They Vaishnavite recensioins of the two great epics had a very great impact and this impact moulded the minds of the Manipuri through the ages.

The impact of Vaishnavism on the art of story-telling is so great that even when the *pena* singer narrates the story of Khamba and Thoibi, you can very easily find the influence of Vaishnavism. The prince of Moirang is depicted as the embodiment of Vishnu and Khamba is shown as the embodiment of *bhakti.* Turn the pages of Angahal's *Khamba Thoibi Sheireng* and you will find that Vaishnavism had made a very great impact on the art of telling the story of Khamba and Thoibi.

Behind every performing art, there is the artist and behind every artist there is the society which produced him. Vaishnavism permeated the Manipuri society from the beginning of the 18th century upto about the middle of the 20th. Vaishnavism therefore had a great impact on all forms of art. The great impact of Vaishnavism on the performing arts of Manipur is a natural corollary.

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Traditional Theatre of Manipur

Theatre is a live performance by actors or the presentation on the stage of the actions which give coherent expressions in a time-space-audience framework. Theatre emerged quite late in the cultural evolution of men. It as believed to have its roots in the primitive rituals, transformed into worshiping the deities and the unpredictable mysterious cycles.[1] It all began with simple imitation, but in the process, the rites and rituals became a part of the rigid tradition. Even today many of the traditional theatrical forms of oriental and African countries have religious roots.

Traditional. theatre is close to the consciousness of the people. Handed down from one generation to another, consistent with their cultural traditions. It incorporates dance, music, polity, mimes, symbolic gestures etc. which are theatrical through which the sense of fertility can be brought to the subconscious layers of human mind. This paper is an attempt to study the traditional theatre forms of Manipur within the socio-religious and economic milieu that shaped and moulded its history.

Since time immemorial, the Manipuris were acquainted with a distinctive concept of traditional theatre. The native civilization was either in the form of sport or ritualistic performances. The *Lai haraoba* is one such ritual oriented enactment of cosmic process in human performance. It is community cosmic process of creation, energy life world and ordering of human world using human resources, abilities and human capital.

The term traditional theatre connotes a long cherished heritage to the people bound to preserve and pass on the future generation. It incorporates the specific shapes, forms and conventions that evolve and flourished in a particular period of the history yet dynamic and growing. Theatre in the most elementary of forms is inarticulate mainly depending on the body movements, dance, music, songs, expressions, symbolic gestures, mimes, depending neither on a formal text nor on improvised speech. Theatre in general term is inclusive of all the elements that contribute to a performance of a dramatic nature.

"However the non-western practices of theatrical performances or events was unknown to the western scholars emphasized on play going, play representation including the text[2]. Antonin Artud said that the western concept of theatre is physical reflection of script[3]. Only later in late 19th century and early 20th century, the western theatrical theorist discovered the prevalence of an extraordinary human performance which they categorized as oriental or African theatre. We may take Antonin Artud who came across the non-western theatrical practices in Bali under the colonial patronage of French in South East Asia Empire and Bertolt Brecht being fascinated by the performance of Beijing opera. The western scholars were surprised and extremely inspired by the body language of such human practices which were immensely theatrical in form, nature and character. "Gesture in Asian theatre do not supercede language but it often carries on where language leaves off"[4]. The spoken word and script that employs the main medium of communication in western theatre, in African theatre and oriental theatre are replaced by aesthetic mode of communication songs, dance, mimes etc. Such distinct characteristic of Oriental theatre attracts the western scholars like James R. Brandon, Faubian Bowers, Meyerhold, A.C. Scott, Antonin Artud, and directors like Peter Brooks, etc.

Like wise, the non-western theatrical age old performances in Manipur (enduring impression and stronger impact on the audience) is different in principles with distinct codes and concentrated expression of civilizational character. The long rooted ritualistic traditional performances prevalent were mentioned as non-western theatre purely from the colonial perception, from the west. The classification of such human performances into different categories was not conceptually theorized but as Chinese theatre forms like Beijing Opera, Japan's Noh and Kabuki, Indian plays as prevalent in forms of *Natyashastra* and other South East Asian *Barong*, and performances of Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesian, Java, etc. "Not enough is yet known in the West about the early history of Oriental theatre to ascertain; the degree of interaction between the various dramas of distinct nation origin[5].

The concept of traditional theatre itself, thus was a latter entry with the consciousness of the theatre increases. *It* is used as a paradigm to connote the theatrical performances within the non-western world rediscovered by the West.

It is, however, to be taken into consideration the problems in ascertaining what actually compose traditional theatre. In traditional theatre there are two aspects or style of acting as laid down in *Natyashastra* in the Indian context i.e. *Natya dharmi* and *Lok dharmi.* The *Natya dharmi* or the classical form is referred as a classical presentation (usually organized by a high feudal power with the practices, codification, and immense aesthetic values and exhibitory of a high civilizational order. This conventional type receives almost exclusive attention in the text[6]. The other category *Lok dharmi* or folk form is mostly popular and community oriented with a loose structure and minimal codification. The two aspects are broadly divided restructuring within the framework.

Natyashastra and its basic principles of the classical status are percolated in varied regions organizing theatrical forms like *Kathakali, kuttiyattam, Teyyam* in Kerala, *Yakshagana* in Karnataka, *Ankia Nat* in Assam, and *Raas leela* of Manipur (as followed according to *Natya dharmi*). The above mentioned forms are also called as Dance Theatre by the West due to the performative principles mainly dance, music and ritualistic elements in sanctified environment.

As categorized folk forms, it does not signify primitive only but related to more or less human performance, community to the community by the citizens of its community through a long practice, participation and enactment/performance. Most of the Manipuri traditional theatre form however cannot be studied or identified from the point of community activity of an amateurish kind. For example theatrical performances like *Lai haraoba,* cannot be simply identified as folk because of its near classical status. However, there is problematic in understanding the cosmic values and inherent meanings. Other such performances were *Nupi pala, Moiranq Sai, Phagee, Moirang parba, Khongjom parba, Shumang leela,* etc.

The history and growth of traditional theatre forms in Manipur, however, cannot be studied in isolation like any other historical events. It flourished and emerged within intense socio-political and economic environment. The history of theatre has witnessed two different world-views corresponding to the different political religious set up. The native civilization had a set of value system and belief system that were manifested in every aspects of life; let it be music, dance, songs, rites, games, theatre, etc. The indigenous religious festival of Lai haraoba is one such glaring example. The emergence of Hinduism in the 18th century inspite of sporadic resistance led to a new social order. The royal court accentuated the new ideology and principles by inculcating performing art forms based on Hindu traditions. The patronage of royal court helped deliberately in the spread of Hindu priestly class in different localities with the construction of temples and *mandaps* or pavilions at the precincts. It spread the Hindu ideology, philosophy and traditions at grass root level. The meeting of two religious dimensions inspite of oppositions led to an artistic synthesis. The patronage of the court led to the growth of numerous court supported theatre forms. Eminent teachers were assigned task to create new forms, set up institutions that patronized music, dance, etc. In their successful efforts the new content infused in the native form with immense codification and stylization spread far and wide and later became compulsory rites and observance for every Manipuri Vaishnav.

And by the18th century, with the emergence of Hinduism new performing arts led to creation of numerous court supported theatre forms like *Raas leela*, *Gostha leela*, *Udukhol*, *Goura leela* and plays from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Outside the court supported traditional theatre forms many other theatrical performances with intense secularization elements developed in the late 19th century and early 20th century. *Moiranq parba* is one such strong performative form and *Phagee leela* (clowning), *Eshei leela* are examples of secular practices and not religious at all. In Manipur today, like other parts of Southeast Asian or like the overall oriental theatre, the traditional theatres still form an inseparable part in the lives of the people. And along with the rich traditional ritualistic performances, proscenium theatre still thrives.

Performative elements are found both in pre-Hindu and Hindu period. The theatrical performances are in separate forms but mutually interactive. Historically the forms of Lai haraoba are infused in the structure and codification of Raas leeia but not vice versa. This anecdote brings out the pre-Hindu religion being both oppositional and assimilative in nature. *Raas leela, Nata Sankirtana* as such are at the height of syncreticity. What at any rate the post Hindu forms owes to India is a large part of its subject matter - the Vaishnavite text as the content but naturally a great deal of native colouring in a locally existed form. The *Lai haraoba* served as the source for many Hindu performances (in matter of space - in Kalidaman). An examination of the performative structure, principles and texts revealed the difficulty in categorization the two aspects of *Natya dharmi* and *Lok dharmi.* The traditional theatre thus signify not only the folk but 18th to 20th century created theatrical performances of near classical status. So the theatrical performances are altogether studied within the paradigm of traditional theatre to avoid any misleading and conceptual differences. No doubt different historical phases have shaped the development and maturity of traditional theatre forms.

The popular theatre as such was a late entry with the colonial rule and a later phenomenon. In the overall theatrical performance history there is break and continuity. It is important to identify the theme motive, aesthetics, beliefs, form and performative principles to place within non-western traditional theatre forms. The traditional performances, therefore, emerged from a tradition shaped by the perception and parameters created through history.

LAI HARAOBA

The quintessence of Manipuri traditional theatre form is *Lai haraoba* ceremonial and ritualistic performance. Lai haraoba is the performance expression and celebration of the traditions that reached out to the consciousness of the latent cosmic power based on myths and rituals over generations regaining its relevance and meaning.

Lai haraoba is celebrated with the coming of summer season. The dates are fixed with the consent of the *Pandit Loishang* (office of Pandits) representatives of the concerned community. The community members volunteered for cleaning, construction and working into the needs well in advance. The responsible officials performed their assigned duties. Invitations are given in advance to the main ritual functionaries or actors, viz. *Amaibi, Amaiba* and *Penakhongba*. They linked the cosmic world with the mortals'.[7]

The *Lai haraoba* is performed in the *laibung* a rectangular space in front of the shrine. The audiences surround the three sides, the left side for ladies and right side for men. A clear cut demarcation is laid down. The preliminary rituals of cleaning the shrine, dressing up the presiding deities is done a day before the festival begins. The Lai haraoba can be performed for one day only or even for a month. The main ritual of the first day is *lai ekouba* procession from a nearby pond, lake or. river to bring up the spirit of the deities. A huge congregation including the community participates in the rituals which are exhibitory involving intense symbolic representations and identification. The *pa* (male) and *pi* (female) principles called up from the water through the hiri lang are brought back to the shrine. The entry into the *laibung* is signified as a step to an ancestral sacred realm. The spirit is then infused to the presiding deities.

The spirits (representing by *langthei* plants) of the deities in the festival are either taken but and placed in the *laibou la* (right in the centre of *laibung*) or tied in a cloth and bear by the laipubas. Most of the main rituals depict the *Leishemba* myth (or the divine act of cosmic creation). and manifest the divine union of father sky and mother earth to propitiate for procreation, vitality, abundance and healthy community life.

The most spectacular sequence is the *laibou* cycle or the creation of the human body (its various anatomies) from conception through *laibou khutek* or hand gesture in 364 *khuteks*[8]. In the 64th *laibou khutek* the soul is infused in the body[9]. The ritual functionaries and the participants perform through mimes, antiphonal singing. *Yumsharol khutek* or the construction of house and *pamyanba* or the -acts of cultivation are performed through dance, dialogue, mimes and songs. The act of cosmic creation and cosmic' processes are re-enacted in the *phijang* cycle which incorporate important rituals like *chongkhong yetpa, chongkhong litpa* and formation of *lairen paphel* (python symbolic) motif or *lairen mathek*.

Lai lam thokpa and *kanglei thokpa* rituals are also performed with huge community participation. The *lairoi* on the last day of the festival is important and completion of numerous rituals is a must. In the midst of sacred rituals like *thang thaba* (or placing of swords), *hijing hirao* making of boats for the lais to return to their heavenly abode), *Saroi khangba* (appeasing of the evil spirits) etc. an interesting ritual oriented theatrical interlude *Tangkhul Nurabi* is performed. This cosmic dance drama about *Noncrpok Ninqhtou* (*Tangkhul*) and *Panthoibi* (*Nurabi*) is enacted with fun, songs," riddles, pranks, frolic and excitement and imparts the civilizational values too.

Lai haraoba as one of the traditional pre-Hindu theatre forms thus can be analyzed from its close association with ritual. The organic unity emphasizes the theatrical (potentials of the performance. The *Pena* music determines the mood, pace, rhythm and movement of the performances. The *Lai haraoba* has its own conventions of stylization with a close conscious relationship between the actors and the audience. The *Lai haraoba* itself is a performance text which shows predominant relationship of men with cosmic world. It is non-western and civilization specific in their collective thinking and forms a huge theatrical finesse.

Nata Sankirtana: Maharaja Bheigyaehandra (A.D. 1763-1798) founded *Raas leela* which necessitated the creation of Nata Sankirtana, as without this tradition the essence of Ras leela would be meaningless. The *Bangdesh pala* tradition made it easier to create a new *Nata Sankirtana* form[10].

Nata Sankirtana is a performance which according to the Vaishnav philosophy is a Mahayajna and the only means to attain salvation or *moksha* in *Kali yuga*[11]. The main essence of *Nata Sankirtana* is Bhakti and *Ujjwal prem* of Radha Krishna. Lord Gouranga a symbolical representation of Lord Krishna and Smt. Radhika is used as a medium. It is a *mandap* or pavilion based performance. The main actors or performers are the *eshei hanba* (lead singer) *duhar* (singer and main performer) two *pungyeibas* (drummers) and *khonbhangba* (singers). The *mandap mapu* (Master of the ceremony), *moibung khongba* and *arangpham* play important roles in the *Nata Sankirtana*. *Nata Sankirtana* is performed in marriages, death, *upnayan* (sacred thread ceremony) and related to other seasonal ritualistic festivals. Of all the ceremonies, the *Nata Sankirtana* in death ceremony is the most important. The performers put on the *Nata Astha Vesh Ieng* yan, turban, holding their respective instruments either drum or cymbal.

The performers within the *mandali* are identified as the five main disciples of Gouranga. With ritualistic preliminaries like *Chandan, Boriba,* the *Nata Sankirtana* raga begins.

The *raga* signifies the building up of *Sri Murti* form, right in the centre of the mandali (from toe to head). It is shown non-realistically through the composition of the drum beat syllables. Then, *Guru Vandana* and *Sabha Vandana* are performed.

The songs are 'based on the narration of *Braja leela* and *Nabadwip leela.* The main text is *Radha Krishna Niti leela* chapters dividing the *Krishna leela* into eight time sequences[12] (or eight different types of leelas). The Nata Sankirtana performance progresses and it reaches *Rajmel* (further classified in four parts). Certain symbolic gestures are performed like the pala moving anti-clockwise representing *Brindavan Parikrama* and union of Radha and Krishna in a heightened -and fast music of cymbals and drums. *Nata* songs performance continues leading to *Swadhin* singing which symbolically means the changing of new dress after *sambhog* or union. The *eshei hanba* takes the permission of *mandap mapu* to end the *Nata Sankirtana* with *Nityapad.*

The *pala cholom* (dance of the Natas) or *pung cholom* (dance of the drummers), and *Nata eshei* (Singing by the Natas), are important elements that determine the distinctivene and total theatre forms. The *eshei* or songs and *cholom* or body movements with *abhinaya* make it theatrical and a complete performance. The audiences are also inseparable from the *Nata Sankirtana* and fully involved in their thoughts to attain *Radha Krishna madhur prem rasa.*

RAAS LEELA

Bheigyachandra created *Raas leela* and its first performance was offered to Lord Govindajee at the royal palace Canchipur *Raas Mandal* in A.D. 177913. The Raas leel in content was in conformity to the *Raas leela* of the *Srimad Bhagavata* though in form the native cultural aspects especially *Lai Haraoba* was infused greatly.

The Govindajee idol was installed at Govindajee temple and ideclared as Godking[14]. There are five different types of *Raas leelat:– Maha Raas leela, Kunja Raas leela, Basanta Raas Iteela, Nitya Raas leela* and *Diba Raas Heela.* They are performed according to their corresponding seasons. The context is based on *Srimad Bhagavata lila mrita, Geet Govind*, etc.

The *Maha Raas leela, Kunj Raas leela* and *Basanta Raas leela* are performed in selected temples on specific days In the Govinda Raas leela Radha and Krishna are represented by the idols. At Bijoy Govinda Temple and other places, the child actors perform the role of Radha and Krishna. *Maha Raas leela* is I the most important traditional form.

MahaṚaas leela begins with *Nupa pala Nata Sanjcirtana* as *purvaranga* through *Goura Bhavi*, it completes with *Brindavari: varna.* The *Raasdharl* performs the *Punqlon raga* and begins; the *Raas leela. Sutra* begins raga and specific slokas from the text of *Raas Panchadhya* are recited[15]. The Radha and *Krishna abhisar* is performed through the recitation of slokas mainly by sutra. Gopis perform *Bahnai pareng achouba* followed by '*Antadhvan*' of Lord Krishna. Gopis and Radha suffer the pang of separation with reappearing, Brindavan *Bhangi pareng* is enacted. Finally Gopis performed *pushpanjali* and pujari offer arati to the Lord and Raas leela comes to an end. *Basanta Raas, Kunja Raas leela* and other *Raas leela* have their own distinct meanings in the overall structure with addition of theatrical sequences.

The *Raas leela* performance lasts the whole night. The audience view *Raas leela* as a complete form of *sadhana. Raas leela* is thus inseparable from *Nata Sankirtana.* It is Bhakti oriented and whole events of Lord Krishna is depicted in the form of dance, music, dialogue as imagined through the eyes of lord Gouranga. The *Bhangi pareng* is closely associated with the pre-Hindu traditional form of *Lai haraoba*'s *Hakchang Saba.* It highlights the continuity and grand synthesis of the native rituals and beliefs to the outside philosophy and text. There are plots and sub-plots within Radha, Krishna and Gopi's relationship.

The costume of Manipuri *Raas leela* is the most extraordinary feature. It reveals the innovative artistry and creativity of the people. The main roles of Krishna and Radha are played by children between ages of seven and nine. Gopis especially *makok chingbi* (leading of dancer), are professional actors.

The performance space, audience, orchestra, dance, songs, all follow the rigid codified structure. The body movements are graceful and facial expression are controlled. Direct eye to eye contact with the audience is not allowed. Lower body movements are minimized and they are restricted in the movements of the hands and upper 'body parts. Such controlled factors developed a rich aesthetic value of *Raas leela.*

It is the great achievement of the native scholars and gurus that summarized the content of *Raspanchadhaya* into a performance based ritual theatre form. The story line well articulated conveying the philosophy.

The songs are generally of Sanskrit, Bangali and Brajaboli hough in later performances the Manipuri songs have eplaced the original with native adaptation. Thus, for its clear configuration, codified structure and aesthetics Raas leela has acquired a classical status.

The ardent devotees, apart from *Rass leela* depicted the varied stories as referred in the three stages or age based raja leela episodes. It resulted in the creation of Krishna cycle and Gouranga based traditional theatre forms.

GOSTHA LEELA

Gostha leela is the enactment of Lord Krishna and Sakha's tending the cows. It being one of the forms initiated by the court for many years is annually performed at Govindajee on Gosthasthami. It has a distinctive story line and theme. *Gostha leela* is an attempt to bring relevance to the episodes of Krishna stories performed through songs, dance and dramatic additions providing the rasa to the audience.

Sridham, Sudham are the important *sakhas* and Madhumangol is comic character. It is a kind of children's theatre performed by small children though roles like Nanda, *mamasabi* are enacted by professional actors. The characters ear specific dress.

They eat and play games while tending the cows. In two of the incidents (in *lam thokpa* episode) the children encountered and killed demon Bakasur who came in disguise of a calf (mask) and demon Bakasur is disguise of a big 'crane (mask). The various episodes are clasped in one day performance incorporating all the theatrical elements of space utilization, and mimes symbolic representation, dialogues, chanting, singing, abhinaya.'

The content of *Gostha leela* is based on the 15th Adhyaya of *Srimad Bhagavata*[16]. The performance text is divided into *Nandalaya leela* (scene at Nanda's palace, performed inside the mandap) and *Lam thokpa*[17] (cow tending on a nearby open 'field). It has its preliminary rituals. Orchestra plays an important role.

The main *Nandalaya leela* begins with the entry of Narad Rishi and Balabasu at Nanda's palace to teach Krishna and Balaram the art of milking cows. In continuation the Sakhas or Gopas one by one requested the two mamasabis to send Baldev and Krishna for san senba/cow tending. The mothers finally agreed and the procession then goes to a wide open field for *Lam thokpa* episode. One amazing characteristic is he shifting of the audience too. The child actors perform *Bhangi pareng achouba* and *Brindavan Bhangi pareng.*

Goura leela being a children ritualistic theatre with its distinctive characteristics further enriches the genre of traditional theatre of Manipur.

GOURA LEELA

Goura leela performance is based on the life stories of Lord Gouranga or Chaitanya. Initially, *Nimai Sanyasi* consists the man part of *Goura leela* and in the process of its development, have added numerous episodes like *Madhu mata, Baharti, Sachimata, Abhiram, Biahnupriya, Jagai Madhai, Tara Devi,* etc.[18] It is *bhakti* oriented. It can be preformed for a number of days. The performance begins with *Nipa macha sankirtana pala* – a children group. The first part is the *Sukrita Udhar,* enactment of the birth of *Prabhu, Balya leela* and *Bol Bikram.*

Quazi udhar, Digivijay and *Abhiram* episodes are also enacted one after another. The *Jagai Madhai* episode is one of the hilarious yet is message oriented episode in Goura leela.

The main episode of *Goura leela* is *Nimai Sanyasi.* The climax of the episode is achieved with plot by plot intensification, bringing out the full theatrical enactment of *Gouranga leela.* It depicts the pang of separation of Bishnupriya, Sachi mata and *Gouranga Bhaktas.*

It is a mandap or pavilion based performance fully decorated to give a presentable environment for the leela. Within the main performance space, symbolic demarcation of space for Prabhu, Sachi mata, etc, are made by placing few material objects. The main performers of Gour leela are prabhu, Nitya, Abhiram and Sachi mata. Most of the characters are enacted by well trained professionals while the major characters like Prabhu, Nityai, Abhiram etc are portrayed by young children.

The audience is seated following a strict code of decorum. 'The costume, is fixed according to the nature of character involved. The performance text is mainly taken out from texts like *Chaitanya Bhagavat, Cnaitanya Charita mrita, Gouranga lila mitra,* etc[19].

UDUKHOL LEELA

In the early part of the 20th century *udukhol leela* popularly known as Bala leela of lord Krishna was performed in Manipur. The main essence of this performance was to free the two brothers Nalkuber and Manigriba from the curse that turned them as "*kamalarjun trees*". The performance highlights the mischievous pranks of young Krishna and his Gopas by stealing sweets and butter from the houses of Braja Gopis.

The Gopis being irritated with Lord Krishna and his Sakha's misbehaviors complain to yashoda rani. Yashoda could no longer bear it and decides to teach Lord Krishna a lesson by tying him to the *Sumband* (pestling mortar). Kanhai (young Krishna) drags himself along with the mortar and get tucked in between the two *kamalarjun* trees. The two trees fell down when Krishna forced his way and Nilkuber and anigriba are free from the curse[20].

The main source of the play is *Bhagavad Gita* and fulfills all the other essential *mandap* performance elements' and codes. It no doubt is the outcome of a huge creative and artistic exercise.

Though these forms are ritualistic in nature, the later *Gostha leela* and *Goura leela* had entry of realistic secular path.

MOIRANG PARBA

Almost for many centuries numerous theatre forms based on various texts were performed coincided by artistic rebellions in the form of *phagee leela* and ethnic theatre like *Moirang Parba.* The environment enactment of *Moirang parba* was prevalent during the end of 19th century and flourished during the rule of King Churchand in early 20th century[21]. This indigenous theatre form posed a threat and challenge to the court supported Vaishnav theatre forms. As such it got no patronage and faced persistent suppression of the court. It is mainly focused on the romantic legendary epic tales of Khamba and Thoibi of Moirang principality. It brought a spirit of patriotism though the medium of performance in mother tongue. It is a secular theatre performed in an open space and not necessarily in the mandap.

The *Moirang parba* performance was popularized by two groups *Kongpal Moirang parba* or *Ariba* (old) group and *Keishampat Moirang parba* or *Anouba* (new) group. Both depend on the epic narratives of Khamba and Thoibi. The audience was participatory in the performance of *Moirang Parba*. Some of the important episodes of *Moirang phaba* are *kei phaba* (ordeal with the tiger), *Kao phaba* (ordear with the bull), *Loi thaba* (Thoibi's exile), *Loi Kaba* (Return from exile), *Kanglei Vichar* (Kangla trail), *Samu Khongyetpa* (dragging of Khamba by elephant) *Pana Kangjei* (polo), etc.

The main characters are Khamba, Thoibi, Nongban, Khamnu, Chaoba Thonglen, King of Moirang, etc. This type of theatre being epic-based use the ancient costume, make up even hair styles of the ancient times of Moirang. Moirang Parba has a rich ethnic aesthetics and distinct vocal modulation, body ovements, gestures, and symbolic mode of communication, stage props were used. It is operatic and musical.

KHONQJOM PARBA

Another form of' traditional theatre that emerged in the early 20th century was *Khongjom parba.* The origin of Khongjom parva was attributed to the Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891 at Khongjom, when the mighty British power crushed the small band of Manipuri soldiers[23].

Oja Dhobi Lainou began popularizing Khongjom parba, depicting a saga of the Manipuri martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of the kingdom's sovereignty[24]. Oja Leinou's successors expanded the *Khongjom parba* incorporating *Moirang Kangleirol legends, Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* tales. The new additions would be the changing taste of the audience and the growth of the performers' creativity. There are any well known women *khongjom parba* performers.

Khonjom parba has a distinct style of its own. The songs involved in a flowery dialects are expressed through the rhythmic beats of the *dholok* and *abhinaya* of the eyes, face and hands[25].

The performance has its ritualistic beginning and followed by a codified chrome. The *Moirang Kangleirol Khongjom parba* style is purely based on the tune of *Pena*. Specific themes as per the wish of the host are performed. The audience surrounds on three sides, break is taken during the performance and improvisation can be made on the length of the performance. It is arranged mainly on festivals and on the day of rites like birth ceremony and till today it is popular in the rural areas.

PHAGEE LEELA

The *"phagee leela"* was quite popular during Maharaja Chandrakirti's reign and with the support of royal court. (L. Ibunghol Singh, & N. Khelchandra Singh. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* (Imphal: Sahitya Parishad, 1389), p. 557-558.) Numerous groups that popularized phagee leela were *Chengba phagee, Yotshuba phagee, Pangama phagee.* (N. Ibotombi. "*Manipurgee Shumang Leela*", *Mityeng*, vol. XI, August 1974, p. 67). By the first decade of 20th century, two groups; *Kabuli pala* and *Phadibi Pala* became dominant with cheap comic skits in the... form of defiance and subtle protest against colonial rule. It brought great amusement to the audience (A. Ṣhyamsunder. *Manipurgt Shumang leela amasung Theatre* (Impahl: Manipur Sahitya Parishad, 1980), p7 14.) *The* legacy of the spirit of *Phagee leela* continues ana took shape in the form of courtyard theatre or popularly known as *Shumang leela.* 'Lady boy and clown characters are vital in *Shumanq leela.* It is still today a strong force of the living tradition challenging the socio religious, economic and political problems of contemporary life. *Shumang leela* is the most powerful theatre of social criticism and social issues.

The history of the traditional theatre of Manipur has a vast continuous tradition. However, rapid commercialization and liberalization have changed the people's tastes and values. Local creative aspirations are discouraged. The consciousness and necessity of the masses to preserve their long cherished traditions and values are declining and not able to secure their treasures.

Those who try to modernise the traditional theatre forms without proper understanding of the inherent qualities and evolution of the medium have proved disastrous. *Lai haraoba* form still exists, but the spirit has been lost. *Raas leela* is becoming superficial in nature due to substantial changes for stage shows. *Moirang parba, Goura leela, Gostha leela* and Khongjom parba are almost dying. These traditional theatre forms cannot be a museum piece. As living art, they have to grow continuously and change. The issue has to resolve without endangering the aesthetic validity, meaning and relevance. The traditional theatre forms need public consciousness of their traditional roots and enlightened state patronage.

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Art Heritage of Manipur

To write on the art heritage of Manipur, particularly of visual art covering an extended period of time, is certainly beset with uncertainties as the available records are scattered and scanty. This refers more to the earliest group of the illustrated manuscripts which will form the visual records of a people deeply involved in myth, legend and folk way of life. For the sake of convenience we may group the visual art tradition of Manipur under the following three heads, viz,

1. The earliest period of Manuscript illustrations
2. The traditional phase and
3. The contemporary period

1. The Earliest Period of Manuscript Illustrations

Although the written record of Manipur dates back to 33 AD, according to the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* there are various undated manuscripts which are preserved in the *Loishang* of the royal palace since early times. At the same time many others still remain scattered in the custody of scholars. The manuscript written in the archaic Meitei script on local hand-made paper or *agorbachs* deal in various subjects including human activities, animals, trees, environment, astrology, astronomy, life and death, etc. Interestingly some of the manuscripts are profuṣely illustrated in lines and color.

Characteristics of the Illustrations

In *Supika Laisaba* manuscript (MS on astrology) the illustrations and the texts are shown together on the same page and each of the illustrated episodes is enclosed by decorative lines. Special care is taken to fill in empty spaces of the page in artistic designs. The value of empty space is properly utilized. The line dominated drawings are narrative in character and the colours used are red, black, and blue. Textures were created by criss-crossing of lines to focus on subjects.

In *Khutlou* manuscripts (MS dealing with mysterious contents for finding out clues of lost articles and realization thereof, etc.), however, solid colored areas are prominently used although the role of lines are no less important. Figures and apparels in flat coloured areas are delineated by lines. Focus are shown either in the profile or in the frontal position only. View in three-fourth angle of the face is not seen. This means that the master illustrators are not aware of perspectival treatment of objects.

In style, technique, and treatment of the subjects the illustrations in the *Supika Laisaba* seem to be earlier in period than those of the *Khutlou* illustrations. In the former, illustrations are more marked by colored lines and tonal variations are done by textured lines, while in the latter solid colored areas are mostly used and more importance is given to the over all presentation of the illustrations, a separate page being used for the illustrations.

Conceptual Background of the Manuscripts

By observing the variegated subjects and illustrations given in the manuscripts it may be stated that the manuscripts point to a comprehensive view of the nature, environment, and living beings on earth. For example, some of the subjects are on astrology based on the indigenous calculations of stars and planet (*Meitei Subika*), movements of clouds which are believed to be indicative of natural catastrophe and consequences of human action particularly war (*Leichinlon*), hymns to pre-Hindu deities (*Eratlon*), creation of the Universe and origin of the Meitei clans (*Leithak Leikharol*), creation of earth (*Leishemba*), description of how stars came into being with their respective names (*Thawanmichak-ki Waram*), etc. An interesting illustration is that indicating the seven layers of the royal palace site (*Thon Taret Thonlanmei*) which may also be viewed as an indication of the gradual evolution of mankind from grass roots to the enlightened head having undergone the various stages from the snake, tortoise, boar, cow, elephant, man, and *Taoroinai* one above the other.

Day to day activities of man are no less emphasized in the illustrations. For example, some of the illustrations include two men carrying a coffin with a crow perched on top of it, a snake captured in the fishing net, hunting scene, stylized trees, flowers, birds, hero figure, king and maid, moon, man riding an elephant, horse, sun in different phases (*Numit Khenchanglon*) physician and patient, farmer with bullock, cow and tiger in harmonious relations, *Paphul* guarding the eight direction, etc.

A look at the illustrations indicates close affinity between the day to day activities of man with the animals and the environment. Taken as a whole they give expression to the spiritual and philosophical insights of an unsophisticated people. The illustrations testify to an other wordly world view which is but a symbolic expression of a universal urge and an innate desire of life full of energizing force.

From the humanistic point of view it is natural to distinguish within the sphere of creation, between the sphere of nature and the sphere of culture and to define the former with reference to the latter, i.e., nature as a whole world accessible to the senses creating an organic whole encompassing the cosmos of nature and the cosmos of culture. In short the manuscript illustrations form a pulsating world-view of folk, legend and eco-friendly nature.

Along with this the earliest form of wood carving of *Yangdouba* and *Yangdoubi*, in the form of a man and a woman, to function as the improvised time keepers of yore, as mentioned in the *Tanyeirol Puya*, down to the casting of metals, like brass and bronze depicting deities, the blacksmiths who made war weapons, implements of every day use, the numerous *Komais* of the forest Gods, done in repousse technique, casting of portraits of Garibniwaj, Chingthangkhomba and Anantasai in metal in the 18th century form the concomitant parts of the long heritage of Manipur's art.

2. TRADITIONAL PHASE

The second phase in the evolution of visual art in Manipur is invariably associated with the adoption of Vaisnavite faith in the 18th century by Meidingu Charairongba (1678-1709) and his son Pamheiba. The spiritual core of the religion found its height during the reign of Rajarshi Bheigyachandra Singh (1763-1798) who conceived the famed Ras Leela. The deep emotional appeal of the religion with *Bhakti Rasa* along with Sankirtana swept away the hearts of the people who expressed it in heart throbbing songs and dances at the numerous temples throughout the length and breath of the valley.

To make the religion more effectively revered and followed by the entire population side by side with the pre-Vaisnavite religions of the *Atiya Guru Sidaba, Sorarel, Sanamahi, Pakhangba,* and *Leimarel Sidabi* visual art forms of painting and word carving were used from the time of *Meidingu Chandrakirti* (1850-1886). For this purpose *Karigarh Loishang* (House of craftspersons) was established at the palace. A plethora of art works based on Hindu Gods and Goddesses followed which served as visual symbols of a fundamental belief, faith, and hope. The paintings and wood carvings as tangible expression of a spiritual attitude went on to enshrine tradition. In other words, it helped give stability to a state of mind, a spiritual tradition and thus a complete tradition of the faithful.

The most outstanding contribution in the process of making a tradition of painting comes from the works of Ningthoujam Bhadra Singh (1861-1927) who had his inspiration from the socio-cultured and religious environment. Since the profound feelings and aspirations of the valley people were reflected in his paintings including the episodes from the epic love story of Khamba and Thoibi his paintings were accepted readily by the people at large. There are other paintings and wood carvers like Bhadra's contemporary R.K. Yumjaosana Singh (1870-1954) followed by M. Kalachand Singh, L. Kamdeva and many other who played no less important role in spreading the spirit of the religion through their works.

The main topics of the traditional paintings are the various Leelas of Radha and Krishna, *Lai Haraoba* Festival and anecdotes from the Hindu Gods and Goddesses. In style and treatment the paintings of this phase look tremendously different from the illustrations in the manuscripts. The figures are complete with anatomical proportion, volume, colors, and gestural attitudes. Elements of the composition like trees, hiss, clouds, and animals are realistically treated with the application of perspective - both linear and aerial.

Bhadra's creativity can be observed in his paintings on the romantic epic story of Khamba and Thoibi which fulfill the hopes and affectionate feelings of the people about the epic in terms of paint and brush. Careful modulation of the tonal values in muted color scheme and free rendering of the compositional elements, quite unlike those of the earlier paintings, the onlooker is transported to a vision of dim past full of folk, legend, and poetic imagery.

To sum up, it may be said that the traditional paintings of Manipur are marked by religion based motifs and episodes from the *Moirang Parva.* Objects are distributed symmetrically in a balanced manner with frontal views of faces. Meticulous care is taken to insert details. The style flourished most prominently during the nineteenth century.

3. CONTEMPORARY PHASE

The first half of the twentieth century was characterized by changes in the outlook of the people of Manipur due mainly to the influence of westernization in the realm of education, mode of living, and modernity in attitude. The western style of academic painting and use of painterly language in bold colours and cubistic treatment of forms with straight lines and triangular forms has caused a big change in the technique and concept of the artists of the new generation. Painters start visualizing the stark realities of life - miseries, violence, corruption, instability in law and order situation, rather than the religiously and mythologically oriented subjects. The mental makeup of people showed the critical turn during the time.

The period from 1947 to 1972

The twenty five years after Independence i.e., from 1947 to 1972 witnessed the beginning of two turning points. First, paintings ceased to be based mainly on religion. Artists turned to secular and natural subjects, like, ordinary man, portrait faces of tribals, animals, landscapes, and environment as was evident from the first ever art exhibition of Manipur held in 1947 at the improvised hall at the Manipur Dramatic Union. Second, artists started visualizing inherent aesthetic qualities of objects and happenings over and above depicting natural likenesses. This, in a sense, creates a new reality adding to the stock of nature. This creative attitude of the artists is markedly different from that prevalent in the prewar conservative and religious environment.

The establishment of the Imphal Art School in 1949 which was upgraded to a college in 1959, and the critical discussion on art, literature, and other aspects of culture conducted under the auspices of the *Cultural Forum Manipur* (estd. 1959) have brought in further changes in the concept and technique of the artists. Three art exhibitions followed during 1968 and 1971 in which various contemporary styles were put up for show along with academic realism.

1972 Onwards

The process of creativity in the arts was further accentuated by the establishment of the Manipur State Kala Akademi in 1972, with the objective of patronizing art, literature, and culture and the Arts Society Manipur for the visual arts (estd. also in 1972).

The ensuing period of about three decades was occupied with hectic art activities covering cultural exchange programs with other states, seminars, group exhibitions at vanous cosmopolitan cities of the country, lectures, art workshops each under an eminent artist from outside the state, etc. Being emboldened Manipur artists started taking part in state, regional, and national and even international art exhibitions. Admittedly Manipur artists joined the national mainstream of art movement.

The Experimentalists

Works of a few artists with very brief notes are taken up below for their concern with the prevailing human situation:

> 1. L. Shamu (b.1940) focuses on the tense human situation and sympathises with social activists struggling for restoration of normalcy; 2. Koolchandra M. (b.1950) paints to expose unwanted tensions of cultural conflicts; 3. Y. Ibochouba

(b.1951) empathizes with the sufferers of ethnic clashes; Ch. Premananda Roy (b.1955) contemplates on how to restore balance out of societal malaise; 5. R.K. Joykumar (b.1957) expresses uneainess over the exploitation of the weak; 6. Y. Gunindro (b.1958) longs for return of the age of innocence over the social turmoil; 7. Ksh. Sarat (b.1961) laments over the fate of the helpless; 8. B. Bonomali Sharma (b.1965) visualizes in sculpture an image of emancipation of the womenfold; 9. L. Ishwarchandra (b.1969) incisively looks at the prevailing tensions and reacts through sweeping brush strokes; 10. S. Imobi Sharma (b.1969) expects a violence-free construction of society; 11. R.K. Thambalsana (b.1970) worries about the sound and fury of technological inroads; 12. Scluptor N. Labango Meitei (b.1970) reacts to avoid the prevailing fear psyche; 13. Th. Tombi (b.1936) protests against the social and political brutality for a return to peaceful existence.

Downward Trend

In spite of the initial enthusiasm the pace of creativity in the visual arts has slowed down considerably. Some of the probable reasons are given below:

First, since market for creative art work is almost non-existent in Manipur many of the artists spend more time and labour on other lucrative jobs than for creative works.

Second, the north eastern region is one of the poorest and Manipur is not an exception. However poor financially the people may have been they have a feeling of a magnificent cultural past. With such a notion coupled with colonial hangover and aspiration for transcendence the people have an 'injured ego'.

Third, the prevalent malfunctioning in the handling of law and order situation, uncontrolled violence, corruption, and exploitation have injected a deep sense of purposelessness and anguish in the minds of the people which creates tension and tends to occupy the core of creative consciousness.

Fourth, the presence of an illusionistic environment and false image of the western world brought up by the latest technological breakthrough, like cable TV, Internet, and others in the minds of the younger generation creates split personalities and an unreal dream world.

An Anchor Awaits

What is of prime importance now is to nurture the actual community living with its pristine serenity at the cultural and political spheres. The sense of community belongs as much to the past as to the future. It is only through it that an artist can express his own language, imagery, forms, texture, words, sound, and psychological truth. This will create a native cultural symbol which stands new and vitalistic to the eyes of other nations through creative synthesis.

The artists of this place work in the most unfavorable circumstances. The technique and style of many of them are contemporary and on par with other practitioners in the country. The dexterity befits an original conceptual line of action to expose the home grown cultural identity.

In the third world countries including Indiamodernity itself is looked upon as an anomaly. However, with the changed environment modernity is to be experienced by all means in the wider social reality when winds of cultural crosscurrents and internationalism have created a global village.

In the west modernity is now considered as already exhausted. By the dawn of the 21st century all the faiths in the ideals of democracy, social bonds, reason, humanism, subject itself, history, tradition, and anything logical have come under critical scrutiny leading to even negation of modernity. The question whether it is a transitional phase is yet to be answered. At such a vacuous phase so to say, a styless style vaguely recognized as post-modern has come up.

Under such a bewildering and perplexing period of art movement the artists of this place have to take recourse to an anchor that springs from the native tradition which has no equivalence anywhere in the world of art.

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N. Sanajaoba

Early Manipur National Institutions Law & Justice Structure

Abstract-The state of Manipur had successfully evolved civilizational values, principles of constitutionalism, rule of law and justice during its two millennia of historical experience within the monarchical and feudalistic framework, which obviously bore the testimony of inevitable, institutional arrogance and brutality. The valley Meetei *herrenvolk* had crafted a confederacy of several independent principalities with relatively autonomous village republics of Meetei-cognate tribes, which had been known to the British as Manipuri Nagas and Manipuri Kukis . Manipuri civilization in a broad sense of the term had been multicultural and pluralistic . The valley people had a royal edict on criminal law in 429 A.D., a constitutional system since 1100 A.D. along with tribal customary law and justicing sub-systems. The national institutions of **Lallup, Shinglup, Cheirap,** *Khulbu* and, *Khullakpa*, among others, remained the cornerstone of Manipuri civil society and state till the British intervention in the late 19th century. Certain values endure in the Manipuri civil society after weeding out some others due to obsolescence rendered by the imposing modern institutions.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS IN THE PAST

People of Manipur – the Manipuris in brief had crafted the Manipuri history in the way history had ever been made out of scattered human groups in Europe or, India or elsewhere after the first settlers from South-East Asia had occupied the space and time. The *herrenvolk*

Meeteis and the peripheral Meetei-cognate tribes moulded the confederal and pluralistic history within the territory of the state through violent as well as friendly interactions in varying degrees. Manipuri kings viz., Nongda Lairel Pakhangba of the **Ningthouja** clan, Loiyamba, Kiyamba, Khagemba, and Pamheiba, among others, had built up national institutions – political, socio-economic, cultural, constitutional, legal in progression. King Kangba – a king who preceded Pakhangba in proto-historical period had accepted Sarish (**Sanamahi**) as the almighty of the Meeteis, did a little bit of homework in the Meetei ethnogenesis,

The thirty Manipuri hill tribes – the Meetei cognates scattered in the high altitude areas of the present state, who were given Naga and Kuki nomenclatures by the British not so long ago in Manipur history, for the colonial convenience only managed their primordial form of village republics with their **Khuillakpas** (Ningthous or village chiefs) as their respective political and cultural authority while retaining the community land in tact and customary laws , which are sometimes democratic or authoritarian in varying degrees . With their relative village autonomy, the Meetei-cognate tribes remain the inalienable part and parcel of Manipuri history inspite of the recent imperialistic policies of certain expansionist groups in the region . They evolved their own autonomous form of legal sub-systems, civil and criminal justicing systems, several of which are retained even today. Institutions like hero worship through head hunting, inter clan blood feuds had been weeded out by the Christian principles and modern institutions.

The centralized Meetei confederacy , later transformed into Manipur state had evolved a centralized administration after assimilating seven independent kingdoms, created a central market, institutionalized a monarchical polity equipped with state apparatus (**Loishangs** – .i.e. government departments), defence apparatus and a foreign ministry (**Awapurel**). Territorial consolidation followed by **Panna** classification, land laws, taxation system had been completed in phases . A penal code had been adopted in 429 A.D. to be followed by the adoption of a Constitution in 1100 A.D. National institutions had developed in the Manipuri body polity thereby evolving civilizational values, constitutionalism, rule of law, criminal laws, land laws, judicial and justicing system . Some racist scholars made a point that after the valley Meeteis converted to Vaishnavism, the

Hindu stalwarts and the British intruders had civilized the savage. This is a misnomer and prejudicial concoction. The Chinese called the white people and westerners barbarian and savage. It also happens other way round . Manipuri polity had successfully crafted national institutions like the basic laws, criminal laws and other mechanisms in the last two millennia of struggle for survival and ascendancy.

Dissent against authoritarianism - The early Manipuri polity had been structurally authoritarian because of the monarchical institution as it had been elsewhere. However, the testimony of active dissent bore proven democratic values, which survive even today in the changed context and epoch.The early Manipuri text-**Numit Kappa** is a narrative of class struggle of an oppressed individual slave against two ruling Manipuri kings(Numit i.e. sun). The elder of the two suns (read kings) had been shot down by arrow of the slave, whereas the younger king in his cowardly style fled away from the kingdom out of the fear of a committed Manipuri slave. An extract from the narrative:

> ***Khuwaai Nongchongpam Naicha Yekma Haotangla Namu Pongparacha Atanpana .... Tauhuireng Ahanpapapu soiyonle ....Nawa khoichu tenna....yimuphiraksana .... trau tau kapthare SanaKhommaton Atonpa ....Lairen makonnungta santhupkhire Loiren khunpilokta.***

The *Numit Kappa* legacy had not been disapproved by the Manipuri citizens of the early period and the legacy had passed onto the new generations. The eminent principles like - "*Leibakna Namma Ningthouna Namma*" (king on one side and the people on another side) and "*Ningthou ngamba Angamba*" (noblemen who can win over the king, "Ningthou Pongba Tara" (ten noble men who function alongside the king) had evolved over the centuries notwithstanding the authoritarian monarchy. Thonglen of the Moirang principality is one such nobleman who proves equal to the might of the king .

The rebel thought had been demonstrated by not less than seven royal scholars who resisted the king in the 18th century. One of the rebel scholars Moiranag Lalhanba had been thrown into the burning stacks by the servants of the king. Frequent uprisings and insurgencies both from the plain areas and the Manipur hills contested the seat of power in a routine manner. The 1947 Manipur State Constitution of sovereign Manipur banned awarding of capital punishment to political dissenters and political rebels. The deeply engrained rebel thought and dissent philosophy softened the rigours of the institutional authoritarianism. Democratic values had been seeded in early Manipur. Active dissent is an early political convention of the Manipuri civil society which hierarchical or caste-based society would hardly perceive in its imagining ability.

Certain evidence or relics of anti-authoritarian conscience-structure could be witnessed even today.Iromchanu Sharmila's twelve-year old fasting against AFSPA,1958 leaves behind any fasting human being or leader elsewhere irrespective of the stature or political cause advanced. Self-immolation of a Manipuri youth – Pebam Chittaranjan against AFSPA and similar other contemporary forms of dissent are cultural relics of *Numit Kappa* allegory. Certain values still survive inspite of great institutional changes. Several other democratic forms of **dissent** are visible in a routine manner.

TWELVTH CENTURY MANIPURI CONSTITUTIONALISM

Manipuri constitutionalism, rule of law and established justicing system could be traced to Manipuri Constitution - *Loiyamba Shinyen,* adopted by the king Loiyamba in 1100 A.D.Royal edict on Manipuri Penal Code had been adopted in 429 A.D. in a rudimentary form. Manipuri hill tribes had their own relatively autonomous sub-systems which vary from village to village- each village functioning as republic with the least intervention in their domestic affairs from the Manipur king whose main administration and seat of central authority lies in the valley . The national institution of **Lallup** – a military organization had been set up in the early period, probably during the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in 33 A.D.

It had been closed down due to the British disarmament of the Manipuris since 1891.The national institution of **Shinglup**-a civil society, village level mechanism had been found to be equally old. The institution as such exists no more save the spirit of Shinglup that glues the civil society even today in another context.

SHINGLUP is an important civil society organization, constituted under the leadership of the village chief.Literally, it means *Shing* (woods)- *Lup* (organization). When a man dies in the village, woods are collected for the funeral of the deceased. In functional terms, it transcends the funeral matter. In small disputes, the Shinglup amicably decides the issue and maintains the village solidarity. In economic terms, as and when some one is sick, assistance is given to the sick; and food is served to extremely needy family in trying times. In some cases, houses had been constructed with the village assistance. The spirit of the national institution has been found till the other day in the recent past.

LALLUP is the most important defence, or military organization in the realm functioning for nearly two millennia till the British interventionists in Manipur sovereignty abolished it in order to militarily immobilize the Manipuris , under a false pretext of modernizing the pre-modern Manipuri polity. British writers had a bad opinion of this institution by comparaing it with forced labour and not with the western practice of Conscription. Service to the state for defence is what the institution stands for.

The institution functions as a military organization with **Lalmee** (soldier), *Lallupchnigba* (leader of the militia) and *Khundin* - the supervisor of the institutionas the military resources and assets.

In peacetime, the soldier-members of the institution serve the state (read king) in different civil capacities like bridge construction, road construction, craftsmanship or leatherwork. The British considered it as forced labour; however, defence of the realm in as many as six **pannahs** (valley division) was found necessary. Every male of the age group 17 to 60 barring women, sickmen, oldmen above the age of 60, *Peebas* (clan heads) had been drawn from the Meeteis, the Manipuri Brahmins and Muslims to the military service.

A *lalmee* (soldier) in the institution has been entitled to cultivate one pari (2 and a half acres) of cultivable land subject to payment of tax to the state. In case of illness, a substitute has to be sent or a fine of one rupee has to be paid . The supervisors do not deposit the fine to the state, and deposit to his pocket.

After the abolition of *Lallup*, land revenue of Rs. 4 for each pari has been collected and it has been raised to Rs. 5 later on. The *lakpas* who collected the revenues got 10% of his collections. Paradoxically, some officials in the present state expect to receive some commission from the citizens. Some call it corruption, but the officials are found to be very honest in the said deal. The institution makes hole for unscrupulous people in power.

In Manipur hill areas, five hill divisions - **Lam viz.,**Tangkhul lam, Mao lam, Kapui lam, Tammu lam and Moirang lam have been made and placed under *lam subadars.* A house tax of Rs. 3 has been collected in the late 1890s from every Manipuri hill house. The division of the *lams* does not plant the seeds of inaccessible ethnic homelands; it is rather a suitable mechanism for revenue collection under British days. The state and territory has remained in tact inspite of the internal trappings devised for revenue matters only.

JUSTICE – PRINCIPLES AND SYSTEM

Early Manipuri theory and mechanisms of justice has been characterized by divine ordeals, natural mandates to be followed by positivist, constitutional and legal devices. The feudalism and monarchicalism like their universal counterparts in the west and the east remains the overarching pinnacle of justice. The king remains the law-giver and fountainhead of justice whereas, he has never been different from any other human beings. Citizens owe responsibilities to the state and his or her civil liberties remain extension of the responsibilities. The significance of justice as fairness has been arbitrary, although the noblemen - the feudal order has rendered the justice system to be fair exclusively to them. As regards the separation of powers , judiciary has been separate from the executive, but the boundary remains blurred.

An extract from the royal edict in 429 A.D.:

> ***Meidingu Apanbana wahei ani haipharoi...Kaidanaba wayen chumo, thoutha namguno....Thakshikhasi Namlanguno...Wayel kaipharoiye...Ninghtou shemba Meeshingdee tumna hato.***
> (*wayen chumo* means do proper justice)

During king Kangba's period , each of the two opponent parties seeking justice has to plant a flag before each of them. The party whose flag falls down due to the wind is the loser of the justice. Ordeal by fire and also by water have been prevalent. Gradually, the Manipuri judiciary crystallized into (1) the king as the ultimate appellate authority, (2) the **Cheirap**-the supreme court of the land with hereditary judges; (3) the **Top Garod** = the military court for trial of soldiers and defence personnels, (4) the **Pacha** – court for the women only and (5) minor courts including court for injuring the cattle, the *Shinglup*, among others. The Manipuri hillmen – the Meetei-cognates, recently renamed as Manipuri Nagas and Manipuri Kukis to suit the British colonial interests, have their own near autonomous village-level judiciary under the *Khullakpas* – chiefs. When the British interventionists come, their offenders staying in Manipur state have been tried differently with the British officials in the chair.

The penal system was not refined and crude like the early British crudities in their own homeland. Treason and murder has been awarded with capital punishment. Flogging, packing rebel princes in the bag and throwing into deep rivers, humiliation of women offender in public (*Khong-goinaba*), exile of delinquents to Sugnu (*Sugnu-loithaba*), degradation of offenders to the *Loi* areas, imposition of fine, among others are common forms of punishment. The royal edicts which provide the penal code have been revised .

Two institutions are infamous and malignant. The **Churanthaba** like the present day commandos abduct people for sacrifice to non-existent deities. There is sanction of the king behind this nefarious institution. Mild form of slavery has existed in Manipur till it has been abolished in the 20th century. These two institutions have been weeded out. One notable feature is that Manipuri women enjoy more liberties than their western counterparts, who are struggling with liberation movement even today.

Meenai – a mild form of slavery existed in two forms- voluntary slavery as in the case of debtor remaining in the house of the creditor till settlement of the debt has been made; involuntary slavery as in the case of an offender remaining by rendering services to the king. A thief has to remain a slave till the recovery of the goods is made or, in the case of adultery, the offender remaining as slave till the damages he owes for the offence has been cleared.

Unlike the European or British models of de-humanising slavery in the past or even the caste brutality as India nurtured for millennia, Manipuri form of nominal slavery would retain the slave as a part of the family he or she resides in by co-working with the family members of the owner. The slave cannot be mistreated or dishonoured. In the event of a slave fleeing away from a home, the owner is blamed for his misconduct with the slave. Ironically, some people take money from some others and offers himself as a slave in order to get the easy food, clothes and amenities. British writers impute this form of slavery to laziness.

The king had three kinds of slaves. The **Ayokpa** (or the adopted one) is the major class, who have been treated fondly. In rarest of rare case, cruelty has been meted out to slaves thereby inviting public attention to the cruelty. The nefarious institution has been weeded out. by the modern institutions. Any form of slavery – American or Manipuri – brutal or mild whatsoever – is indefensible by any Socratic method or argument. Monarchy has never been good to the valley Meeteis or the Meetei – cognates in the hills (now known as Nagas or Kukis to the British colonial jargon). The political institution of monarchy has been dead and rejected by history in Manipur. Some feudal elements however, imagine that the dead institution exists in another form.

INTRA – CIVILIZATIONAL DIALOGUE

Manipuri civilization itself represents intra-civilizational dialogue within a constricted space-time frame, among the Sinic, the Indian and the native Manipuri civilizational partners. Maninuri national institutions are the physical embodiment of articulated historical experiences spreading over from primordialism to contemporary multi- culturalism, tilting towards Orientalism.

The law and justice structure reflects the native achievements through trial and error. As usual history is a glorification of a national past- apparent or partially real by overlooking the weakness and failures of all kinds. Manipur has not been an exception to this rule. The influences given by the British and the Hindusthan to the early institutions provides a dialectical upgradation of the institutions and in the process, unsustainable institutions like monarchy, feudalism, *Churanthaba* and slavery etc. have faded away. Certain aspects of the Manipuri thought, values, principles and structures could however, survive. These sustained values have to be addressed to in any process involving intra-civilizational dialogue, which itself happens to be inalienable in a never- ending time travel.

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Traditional Dyeing Systm in Manipur

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The traditional sustainable use of ecosystem by indigenous people is an important area of research to-day. The decade beginning January 1, 1995 was observed as the **"International Decade for the World's Indigenous and Ethnic People"**. There is an inextricable link between indigenous ethnic culture and biological diversity. All over the world, the indigenous people (250 million people) have protected the flora and fauna with which they, have emotional and symbiotic relationship. Massive extinction of rare species would be curtailed after the establishment of critical regions for the protection and sustainable use of various plant species.

Manipur, the border state in the North-Eastern corner of India has been known for its richness in medicinal plants. Its blue mountains and green valleys are the hosts of wide varieties of indigenous plants. From the early periods of human civilization in the state, many of these plants are known to possess medicinal properties in some way or the other. The local people have been using different species of plants in the treatment of different types of ailments. Moreover, Manipuri people had the practice of dyeing clothes using vegetable dyes since the time of king Loyumba (from 1074-1122 A.D.). They use a number of vegetable dyes out of which the ***Kum Dye*** was the most common. It is the time to work now for revitalization of traditional health care and dyeing systems of Manipur in order to keep precious indigenous knowledge into profitable use.

1.1 RECOGNITION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous knowledge and biodiversity are essential human development. According to Posey (1985), indigenous knowledge of ecological zones, natural resources, agricultural practices, etc. is far more sophisticated than previously assumed. 1995 was also declared an appropriate year for the developing the , "International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants" (UPOV) into an 'International Union for the Protection of Breeders and Framers' Rights.'

The agenda 21 of the Rio Earth Summit (1992) stated that indigenous (ethnic) people have a vital role in environmental management and sustainable development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. Article 8 (j) of the Convention of Biological Diversity (1992) requires that the traditional knowledge and resources about biodiversity should be recognised and respected. Further, it entails that such knowledge and resources should be accessed with the approval of concerned communities with their involvement in the future development and sharing with them equitably the benefits arising out of its commercial applications. Today, considerable priority is given to knowing more about the indigenous practices which are of importance to the conservation of biodiversity beacause indigenous communities have a close dependence on biological resources. Their livelihood often depends on these resources. As such in accordance to Article 10(c) –

> "*Contracting Parties are obliged to protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices, to conserve and sustainably use these resources*".

Further, according to Article 18.4 –

> "*The Contracting Parties are also obliged to develop and use indigenous and traditional technologies to consent biological diversity and sustainably use its compounds.*"

However, no article in that connection directly addresses community rights or mechanism for the compensation of indigenous knowledge. Indeed, Article 13 of Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) mandates that governments must respect the special cultural importances of land. Since International Law recognizes as a special and respect.

> *"for the right to development as well as for cultural diversity are essential for ensuring that sustainable development is to benefit all."*

Realising the great role of traditional medicine in global health-care programme especially in the developing countries, the World Health Organisation in its 29th and 30th Assembly in 1976-77 gave formal recognition to traditional medicine and emphasized for the global researches into medicinal herbs and to associate the traditional healers in the National Health-Care Programmes.

The Belem Declaration (founding of the International Society for Ethnobiology in Belem, Brazil in 1988), the Chiang Mai Declaration (International Consultation on Conservation of Medicinal Plants, in Chiang Mai, March 21-26, 1988), Bangalore Declaration (International Conference on Medicinal Plants in Bangalore, February 16-19, 1998) and World herbo Expo (lanuary 12-14, 2004 at Bhopal) also made recommendations related to revitalization of traditional knowledge on health care uses of plan and emphasizes that it must become matters of international priority.

The World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Johannesburg Summit (2002) also solemnly acknowledged that

> *"People are at the centre of our concerns for sustainable development"*

In the language of its own final document (Johannesburg Summit), it was supposed to:

> "*acknowledge the importance of ethics for sustainable development*".

and to affirm that peace, security and stability and respect

> *"for the right to development as well as for cultural diversity are essential for ensuring that sustainable development is to benefit all".*

Realizing the great role of traditional medicinal health care programme especially in the developing countries, the World Health Organisation (WHO) in its 29*th* and 30 Assembly in 1976-77 gave formal recognition to traditional medicine and emphasized for the global researches into medicinal herbs and to associate the traditional healers in the National Health-Care Programme.

The Task Force during its 32nd meeting in February 2003 at Genera has recommended linking of traditional Knowledge Resource Classification (TKRC) developed by India with International Patent Classification (IPC). Marking the first phase of Traditional Knowledge *digital* Library (TKDL) project a CD-ROM database on Ayurveda was released on October 23, 2003 at a function organized at the National Institute of Science Communication And Information Resources (NISCAIR), New Delhi. Speaking at the function, the Chief-Guest Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, the then hon'ble Minister for science& Technology, HRD and Ocean Development said,

> "*The whole world should benefit from our traditional knowledge but at the same time the rite should not be allowed to exploit it.*"

2.0 REVITALISATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF DYEING

System in-Manipur

Manipur, which lies in the North-East corner of India, is rich in flora and *fauna*. There are many plants grown in Manipur which are used as indigenous dye-stuffs for dyeing clothes and furniture by the people of the State. There are more than 50 species which are used as dyes by the people right from the beginning before the chemical dyes were introduced in Manipur. From the ancient times, the people of Manipur started the art of weaving by taking the thread from cotton plant which was grown in plenty both in the plain and the hills of Manipur. The process of dyeing started during the reign of King Taothing-Mang (264-364 A.D.). The system of dyeing progressed during the reign of King Yanglou Keiphaba (969-984 A.D.) who introduced the beautiful textile, named **Hij Mayek** (later known as **Hijam Mayek**), having colourful dyes, which were worn by the womenfolk of Manipur. During the reign of King Loyumba (1074 A.D.-1 122 A.D.) of Manipur, the traditional system of dyeing clothes using different varieties of plant leaves, flowers, fruits and barks of plants was first introduced. He divided two categories of artists – weaversand dyers. The weavers produced different designs of clothes and the dyers produced yarns of different colours using dyes extracted from the herbs and trees. Unfortunately, the skill of Manipuri dyers was not sharpened for long time and hence, an important art industry lost its importance.

The practice of dyeing using vegetable dyes in Manipur dates back to the times of Meidingu Loiyumba, King of Manipur, who reigned from 1074-1122 A.D. The Meitei women of Manipur have been doing the work of dyeing threads and clothes by using varieties of plant leaves, flowers, fruits and bark of trees. Even today, people not only in rural areas but those living in urban areas also are using these dyes and are of high demand. Vegetable dyes are still used as part of dyeing, for instance, the leaves of the plant *Strobilcoithus flaccidifolius* (local name, *Kum)* are used to obtain a blue, black, blue-black, etc. The land produces so much of natural raw materials for making various dyes, but they are not utilized extensively.

The natural dyes of plant origin of this region growing in the wild can be developed scientifically using modern instrumental methods. The chemical studies of these dyes from plants not yet done nor the chemical properties of available plants of this region have been systematically evaluated. Moreover, these priceless plants are on the verge of extinction, and are under genetic erosion due to deforestation by the practice of shifting cultivation (*Jhuming*) and construction of dams in the hill areas and also due to improper protection. So it is the right time to start work to determine the chemical nature of the natural dyes derived from certain plants of Manipur and to compete and compare the indigenous dyes with chemical dyes in fastness against heat and light, as well as a timely action in conserving these plants which are used for dyeing. Before the coming of the modern chemical dyes, the people of Manipur used these indigenous dyes derived from plants since very early times. Even today, people not only in the rural areas but those living in urban areas also are using these dyes and are of high demand.

In recent years concern for the environment has created a deep interest in natural dyes. This is further enhanced when toxicological effects of dyes during production and harmful effects on skins during wearing are known to people.

Ecological considerations are becoming important factors in the marketing of consumer goods when textile products make a major export item. Exports of textiles must comply with new environmental regulation. The ban imposed by Germany on specific azo dyes caused an upsurge in natural dyes. This led to

(a) Reconstruction of ancient and traditional dyeing technology.
(b) Characterization of colorant in the vast flora of India
(c) Replacement of synthetic dyes by natural dyes for eco-friendly textiles.

As the twenty first century starts, maintaining a safe environmental balance becomes even more important. The cooperation of individuals, companies, communities and countries to make this happen has become a global necessity.

There are eco-ordinate agencies all over the world especially in more developed countries. These agencies are helping in the creation of safe and unpollutted environment by offering naturally dyed cotton, jute and recycled raw naturals. All this effort is done with the objective of:

1. Maintaining an ecological balance.
2. Contisuing our ancient tradition

Natural dyes are non-allergenic and non-toxic. They are sustainable can provide employment to agricultural workeers utilization of wasteland where dye yielding plants can be grown should be taken up.

In the recent years, a drive for using natural dyes is noticed because in the/sophisticated fashion fabric the natural dyes offer pastel colour effect.

2.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE NATURAL DYE

The Manipuri forms of embroidery and textile art have a recognized popularity in many countries all over the world to-day. Pakhangba, the first ruler of Manipur, reigned only during the first century A.D., more appropriately in the year 33 A.D., and that everything that belongs to the present Manipuri Society started from that period only.

Manipur, the easternmost part of India, is geographically divided into the hills and the centrally situated valley. The valley is oval shaped, 790m above the sea level and surrounded by the hills on all sides. In spite of the geographical isolation due to the encirclement of the hill ranges in all sides, Manipur is the abode of various ethnic groups of people of which the Meiteis, who reside in the valley, are the largest group of the State. Next to the Meiteis, the hillmen who dwell in the surrounding ranges occupy a predominant position. The hill people of Manipur are of different groups inhabiting in different hill ranges. Estimating to their divisions, there are twenty nine scheduled tribes. The different tribes have their own culture and customs. A tribe can be recognized by its dress and custom. However, there is a linguistic and cultural affinity between the Meiteis and the hill tribes of Manipur.

Manipuri art and culture represent a conglomeration of different but homogeneous cultural patterns of a variety of communities and tribes inhabiting the vast areas including the flat alluvial plains and irregularly corrugated hilly terrains. The Meiteis, concentrated only in the plains and the tribes living in the hills, had played equally important roles in the long ambiguous process of accumulating the present artistic and cultural heritage. The artistic and cultural activities of the Meiteis, the plain people, revolve around a legendary figure called *Pakhangba*, who is still related by many scholars to the historical Pakhangba, the first coronated king of Manipur. Whether historical or legendary, Pakhangba is still believed to be the one who took the form of a serpent . And the commonest symbol of Pakhangba is the figure of an exceptionally long snake with the tail, after a meaningful coiling, reaching its mouth, a figure regarded by the western mycologists as the symbol of eternity. But in Manipur, there are around 364 such figures belonging to the same mythological Pakhangba. And most of the textural designs on clothes and the pattern of embroidery are believed to be the imitations and the later variations of the natural scaly patterns of a big python-like snake.

The ceremonial dress and costumes assigned by Pakhangba to each of the seven clans along with their respective colours to mark their identification are as follows:

Clans	**Colour**
1. Mangang	Red
2. Moirang	Yellow

3. Luwang	Blue
4. KhabaNganba	Green
5. Khuman	Black
6. Sharang-Leishangthem	Reddish-brown
7. Angom	White

During the reign of King Loyumba (1074 A.D. – 1122 A.D.), many social, religious and cultural reforms were made. During his reign better designs of costumes were introduced. Different clothes were used on different occasions by different clans. *Loyumba Sinyel* (a royal edict and a very important chronicle dealing with the socio-cultural history of Manipur) mentions about the art and crafts in Manipur. Loyumba distributed the duty of dyeing of yarns to the following clans:

Clan	**Colour of yarn & cloth**
1. Langshangbam	Khoipaklei
2. Ahongshangbam	Changshang Muyumlei
3. Yeroibam	Talla Ureirom (Saffron)
4. Khumukcham	Kumlang Kumpal Lei
5. Chingkhwampam	Chingshang Muyum Lei
6. Khumanthem	Hikok Nanau (Blue colour)
7. Washiyanbam	Wanna Katang Manba

2.2 Vegetable Dyes

Since very early times, Meitei women of Manipur valley and tribal women of the hills of Manipur have been doing the work of dyeing threads and clothes by using varieties of plant leaves, flowers and barks. In their own fields, the women used to grow such plants (from which dyeing colour could be extracted). Besides, such plants were available in the surrounding hills. Though it was used for domestic purposes, the indigo (colour) from Kumna (Strobilanthus flaccidifolius) plaits was found to be on sale till recent times. If one grows *Kumna* amongst the various plants used for extracting dye one should not let it die; if one should, then it was believed that it would lead to misfortune. The plant can be grown in wet areas through out the year.

There existed a practice according to which the leaves of the plant had to be collected during a specified period in the year depending upon the stage of its growth whether in the flowering or when it was fully grown. There was also the practice of collecting the leaves within the specified period of time in a year for preserving them. The methods of preparing dye from plants and flowers and also types of plaits from which dyes are extracted, are found to be different from one village to another. Besides, names of dye were derived from nature, flower petals and colour of the flowers. These dyes were used to dye the cotton and *Kabrcmg-silk* threads. Types of colour ranged from mild ones to bright ones

2.3 PREPARATION OF KUM DYE

The methods discussed below for the preparation of the various components of Kum are based on the traditional procedure being practiced in Manipur particularly by the Meitei of Mekola, Mayang Langjing and tribals of Thuiyang.

2.4 PREPARATION OF KUM SUNU (*OYSTER LIME*)

The preparation of *Kum sunu* by the Tribals and Meiteis follows the same procedure. *Kum sunu* is actually the calcined oyster shell, $CaCO_3$. The traditional fashion of calcination in carried out by burning the shell along with dried cow dung and hay. The shells are placed in the core of the dried cow-dung and hay. The ash is kept un touched for one whole night or about 12 hours, and the burnt shells are collected and powdered and sieved.

The grined powder is then hydrolysed with about half water for about 200 gm of powder. The solution is then heated till the evaporation completes and the precipitate thus obtained is branded as "*KumSunu*".

2.5 PREPARATION OF KUHI (PASANIA PACHYPHYLLA)

The preparation of *Kuhi* is made by boiling the bark of *Kuhi (Pasania pachyphylla)* with water in a metal pot until the solution becomes dark red colour The coloured solution, Kuhi is decanted and ready for use.

$$\underset{250\text{ gm}}{\text{Kuhi Bark}} + \underset{\text{I litre}}{\text{Water}} \xrightarrow[\text{1 hr.}]{\text{Boiling}} \text{Kuhi solution}$$

2.6 PREPARATION *UTTI* (ALKALI)

About 10 bundles of rice straw (hay) is burnt and the ashes are collected. The ashes are then put into a lightly knitted bamboo basket and water is filtered through the ashes. This water becomes alkaline and is called *Utti* (alkali), which is consequently used in tile dyeing process.

2.6 PREPARATION OF KUM DYE (INDIGO-KUM MACHU)

At the first stage of its preparation, the buds and leaves of the plant which sprout in the month of *Wakching* (Jan-Febr.) and *Fairel* (Feb-March) are plucked, cut into pieces and put into a pitcher locally known as *Kharung* (earthen pot) in winch water is poured. The proportion of leaves to water is about 2 kg of leaves in 8 litres of water. The pitcher is then kept for about seven days at the *Yenakha* (outer southern side) of the house where there is sunlight, so that the leaves undergo proper fermentation. In some cases, when proper sunlight is not available the number of days of fermentation is lengthen to about 20 days or so. After this the cover of. the pitcher is removed and pitcher is stirred with a multi pronged stick known as *Yaibil* or *Kumsu-Chei*. After careful stirring the solid things like leaves are removed. To the solution is added the *oyster lime or kum sunu* and properly stirred with *Kumsu-chei*. In doing so bubbles are formed which are to be removed from time to time. The stirring is done until the solution becomes redish in colour. The whole solution could be boiled or the material be kept in the pitch for one or two days so that proper sedimentation takes place. Then the clear liquid is decanted. The residue is poured though a thick cloth placed over some required amount, of ash/utti, which acts so as absorbent of water contained in the residue. The residue from (lie cloth is collected, which is the prepared *kum*.

This prepared *kum* is put into a dry small earthen pot so that any amount of water contained in the residue may be completely absorbed by the earthen pot. It is to be noted that, him is prepared/extracted in cold condition, mid in the presence of sunlight. To make fast colour the ashes taken from burning of the leaves of *Khujympere (Achyranthes aspera)* (pH5) or *Laphu chanang* are added This prepared kum dye produces greyish blue colour.

2.8 PREPARATION OF DYES OF DIFFERENT COLOURS USING KUM

(i) Black

For deep black (cool black) or blue-grey, highly plastic clay is mixed in the above mentioned *kum* infused liquid, or after dyeing in the kum liquid, the material is dipped in the clay water and kept for one or two days and then dipped in the liquid infusion of *heikru (Emblica myroblam)* or the infusion is added to the *kum* black.

The black colour is also made after mixing two liquids ie., one liquid, taken after storing at bark of *shahi (Pasania dealbata)* in the water and the *kum*. The liquid taken from the leaves of *Kuthap (Clerodandron adoratus)* is added make the colour fast.

(ii) Dark green – Asangbada Musinba Machu

Kum and U-Napu are *mixed and then it* is again mixed with *the* powder taken from the bark of mango tree, in this way, the colour is prepared.

To make the colour fast, there is the practice of mixing of alkaline not only with *Kum Sunu* but also with ashes taken from burning *Kabowkhaji*, bark of *Kairang* plant *(Symplocos* Sp.), *Yamgli* (a kind of creeper which is also used at the time of brewing local wine), *Laphu chanang, Shcmgjurei, Khujum Pere,* etc. Sometime *Chingleibak* is liquefied in water and boiled; the thread or cloth is then dyed.

(iii) Black deep

For the warm black the fabric or yarn is dyed in the red liquid of *ureirom(Bixa orellana)* or the infusion of the bark of *Kuhi (Pasania* *pachyphylla)* before it is dipped in *Kum* infusion There are also other methods of dying black, but *Kum* is the best. The colour dyed in *Kum* is permanent and the lustre increases as the yarn or cloth is washed.

(iv) Dark-tan – Heikha Apatpa Machu

This colour is made after mixing two liquids, i.e.. one liquid taken from storing in water the bark of *kuhi (Pasania pachyphylla*) plant and the *Kum*

(v) Green (Olive)

Many people of Manipur know the principle of making olive green colour out of the mixture of yellow and blue, Mixture of equal quantity of *U-napu (Minispermaceae)* and *Kum* produces the colour of olive green and by adjusting the quantity of each, bluish green or yellowish green could be produced. Here the dyed yarn or cloth is dipped in the infusion of bark of mango (Tannic acid used as mordant).

(vi) Brownish *Black* Colour

The colour can be obtained by adding amla bark solution, Heining (*Hogplum spondias* magnifera)solution and dark grey clay locally known as *Laimu* to the *Kum* solution.

(vii) Kum Lairemma (Indigo colour)

While preparing the *Kum*-indigo, some people, after examining the stage of the *Kum* dye also add juice taken from Haibung *(Garcinia xanthochimusj, Sugarcane juice (molashes)*, puffed rice etc. Such *Kum* which is being kept in a pitcher for making dye is also regarded as *Lairemma (Goddess)*. As such, whatever fruit or food items added into *Kum* as mentioned earlier, is believed to be an offering which is offered to the *Kum Iạiremma.* Such prepared *Kum* (indigo) which could now be used for dyeing, was put into small pitchers and these areusedto be brought to the *KhwairambandKeithel (KhwairambandMariket)* for sale at high price.

2.9 PREPARATION OF DYES OF DIFFERENT COLOURS USING VEGETABLE/PLANTS OTHER THAN KUM

(i) Dark Brown-Kuhi Machu

This dye is taken from *storing in the* water the bark of Kuhi. There is a difference between the dye taken from long time of storage and the one taken from short time of storage in water. The colour becomes much dark it is taken from long time of storage in water.

(ii) Light brown — Shahi Machu

This dye is taken from storing in the water the bark of the tree *Shahi.* It is lighter than the dye taken from Kuhi tree. To make the dye more fast the ashes taken from *Kum Sunu* and *Laphu Chanmang* are added into the above solution.

(iii) Black - brown

Infusion of the bark of *heikru (Emblic myrobalari)* and *heining (Hogplum spondias magnifera)* with plastic clay containing ironoxide and the yarn or cloth is dipped in it.

(iv) Indian red — Khamu Machu (Khamen Chappa)

This dye is taken from the plant known as *Khamu,* For making *the dye, its* leaves are stored in the water and then decayed. In this way, the dye is derived. To make the dye more fast, *Kum sunu* is added. The *Khamu* dye used to be poured into the hole of the patterned block where a cloth is fastened. From this process, the cloth came to be known as *Khamu Chappa* which later on has come to be known as *Khamen Chappa.*

(v) Pale rose – Lei machu

This dye is taken from the fruit of a plant known as *ureirom* (*Bixa orellana*). The process for preparing the dye is in the following way:

The ripen fruit of the plant is crushed in the water and its seed and solid things are removed and then the fruit - mixed water is boiled. Some people use it without boiling under the fire. After this, the threads or the clothes are dipped into it and than dried in the sun. After drying up, these are again washed in plain water. If this is not done, people believes that the person who wears it will become stricken with a kind of disease known as *Laikoi-ring worm.* To make the dye fast, *Kum-sunu* and *Angom Yensil (Polygonum Chinese) (pH* 3) and the juice taken from *heibung (Garcinia xanthochimus), heinoujom (Arverrhoa carambold)* etc., are also added. The only thing is that there is no fixed amount of those to be used for mixing

(vi) Orange – Red

When ash of banana stem is added to water in which *Ureirom* seed is squeezed, orange-red colour is produced in the liquid.

(v) Meiri – machu

In this case the yarn or cloth to be dyed is first boiled in the *Ureirom* infusion to which is added pieces of roots of *IJ-napu,* then the yarn or cloth is soaken in the acidic infusion *of Heibung and* then again in the water containing *dissolved lac.*

With varying ratios of *Ureirom* and *U-napu* liquid, different shade of orange could be obtained.

(viii) Maroon red

For this colour *Ureirom* infusion is boiled with *bisintri* (gentian red) and the yarn or fabric, after this is soaked in the above liquid to increase brightness of the yam. It is next boiled in the liquid of *Heigru* leaves *(Dillenea indica)* or *Heibung (Careinia xanthochimus).*

(ix) Pink – Leimachu (Thambal Lei Machu)

The *process of preparing* this colour is known as *Leipak Semba. This colour* is dyed mostly on the fine-silk. This particular colour is extracted from the petals of *Kusum Lei (Carthamus tinctorius)* a type of flower which blooms in the month of Sajibu (April-May) and which is offered to the deities by the Meiteis during the time of the religions event known as *Cheiraoba.* This particular flower (bright orange yellow colour) blooms from the month of *Sajibu* to *Inga* (April – June). The process of preparing colour is in the following way:

At *first, the petals are* plucked from the fully bloomed flower. These *plucked* petals are then bound in a type of plantain leaf known as *Leihoura (Amomum Sp.)* till these became decayed. After this, the decayed petals are rolled into small balls about the size of thumb each and these balls are then slightly flattened. This process is known as *Leipak Semba.* In order to get dye, they are then kept under immersion in water and these can be rubbed too. The colour mixed with water is then boiled by fire. Then, threads or clothes are dipped into it and dyed.

To make *the colour* fast an indigenously prepared item known as *Utti*-alkali (made of ashes taken from burning dried *Laphu Chanang*) is added into the dye. To make the colour a little brighter, a liquid extracted from crushing a type of plant known as *Khujum Pere (Achyrantihes aspera)* is added into the dye.

(x) Green – Asangba (Sambam Machu)

This dye is taken from a type of creeper known as *Sambum.* It is taken after its bark is dipped and stored in the water. *Kum Sunu* lime is added into it to make the colour fast. This kind of creeper are widely grown and available in the hills like Koubru, Nongmaijing and Phunal.

(xi) Yellow – Napu Machu

The *colour* is taken from *U – napu.* The said *tree* is *first* dried and *then* crushed and its powder is mixed with that of *Meitei Yaingang (Curcuma domestica)* and the mixed powder is boiled with water. In this way, the colour is made.

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Convergence of Vedic Thoughts and Traditional Manipuri Religious Beliefs

By traditional Manipuri religious beliefs we mean the traditional religious beliefs of the Manipuri-speaking people before the coming of Vaishnavism in Manipur in the 15th century, Manipur lies on the eastern frontier of *Bharat Varsha.* This Bharat Varsha was the country guarded by the Himalayas like a strung bow on the north, by the *purva Samudra* and the eastern offshoots of the Himalayan on the east, by the sea on the south, and by the *Paschim Samudra* and the western offshoots of the Himalayas on the west. *Purva Samudra* is what we now call the Bay of Bengal and *Paschim Samudra* is the Arabian Sea. After the British partitioned India, modern Bangla Desh, West Punjab, Sind and the Northwest Frontier Provinue are no longer parts of India. But before that, they were integral parts of India that is Bharat.

Just as there are passes like Khyber over the Hindukush, the western offshoots of the Himalayas, there are passes over the hills of the eastern offshoots of the Himalayas also. Some of these passes fall in Manipur. One of them connects the cradle of a great civilization via, the Indo-Gangetic Valley with the cradle of another great civilization viz. China. It was one of the most important highways of ancient mankind. The Manipur Valley of some 750 square miles was a haven on this route in the midst of wooded hills and mountains. From pre-historic times upto as late as the 16th century A.D., people from Upper Burma came to and settled in the Manipur Valley. The hills lying between the Gengetic Valley and the Manipur Valley are not high near the south-western corner of the Manipur Valley. The route connecting the Cachar district of Assam, the easternmost extremely of the Gangetic plain, with the Manipur valley is easy and wide enough to allow tamed elephants to pass with ease. From prehistoric times upto as late as the 20th century A.D., people from the rest of India came to and settled in the Manipur Valley. In the last 2,400 years or so, this Valley became a melting pot of races and cultures including religious beliefs and practices. This is why there is convergence of Vedic thoughts and the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Manipuris.

PRINCIPAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The principal contributions of the Indo-Aryan to human civilization are in the fields or religious and spiritual thought, mathematics and astronomy. In this paper, we leave out their contribution to mathematics and astronomy and confine our attention to their religious thought. Their religious thought is embodied mainly in the *Samhitas* of the three Vedas—the *Rig*, the *Yaju* and *Sama*—the *Brahmanas* of these three Vedas and their corresponding *Upanishads.* Further, the most important Veda for our purpose is the Rig Veda. Its *Suktas* i.e. hymns are reproduced in the *Sama Veda* and *Yajur Veda.* Some hymns not found in the Rig Veda are recorded in the *Yajur Veda.* The *Atharva Veda* was not recognized as a Veda for a long time. In discussing the traditional beliefs and practices of the Manipuris, we will rely mainly on the *Samhitas* of the *Rig*, *Yaju* and *Sama.*

Vaishnavism in Manipur began rather late. It began in the second half of the 16th century. By traditional religious beliefs of the Manipuris we mean their beliefs before the coming of Vaishnavism in 1470.

INDO-EUROPEAN HERITAGE

The forefathers of the Indo-Aryans, the Greeks, the Romans, the Teutons, the Slavs, the Celts and some other peoples lived together in their ancestral home for a long time. We call the ancestors of these peoples by the name the Indo-Europeans. For a variety of factors such as the pressure on land because of growing population, the natural desire to move to pastures and the irresistible wander-thirst which seize some primitive peoples, the Indo-Europeans dispersed. Before they dispersed, they shared a uniform or nearly uniform culture including language and religious thoughts and practices.

Even after they moved to different parts of the Old World separated from one another by great distance and even after there was admixture of blood on account of their marrying women of different races of these distant lands, the Indo-Europeans preserved some of the common Indo-European heritage. Even after the efflux of a few millennia, there were some very clear traces of this ancient Indo-European heritage.

The Rig Veda is the earliest record of the religious beliefs and practices of the Indo-Europeans. In the Rig Veda Samhita, we find the Sky-god Dyaus with this consort the Earth-goddess Prithvi, the king of gods Indra who was also the god of rain wielding his weapon the thunderbolt the Fire-god Agni, the Sun-god Surya and the god of each Yama. All these divinities have their counterparts in the mythology of Indo-European nations particularly the Greeks and the Romans. The mythology of Aryan nations bears witness to the continuation of the ancient Indo-European heritage in these nations separated from one another by great geographical distance.

DYAUS AND PRITHIVI

The word *dyaus* means the sky and Prithvi is of course the wide, wide earth. In the Rig Veda the Sky-god Dyaus and the Earth-goddess Prithvi usually occur jointly as *Dyavaprithvi*—a compound of Dyaus and Prithivi. They are the oldest divinities of the Indo-Europeans. They were the creators of all beings. The ancestors of the Indo-Aryans worshipped them as principal deities even before their migration to India. After they descended on the plains of Sapta Sindhava, the land of seven rivers i.e. what we now call Punjab, and became Indo-Aryans, Dyaus and Prithvi were eclipsed by Indra, Agni and Surya. Dyaus as the Sky-god was now replaced by the thunderbolt-wielding Indra, the god of rain who became the king of gods also. Indra was now addressed in the vocative as *dyauspitara* i.e. Father Sky. This word, scholars say, has parallels in Greek Zaus-pater and Roman Jupiter.

W.J. Wilkins in his book *Hindu mythology* narrates a story from *Shatapatha Brahmana*, a Brahmana of the Rig Veda, explaining how

Agni, Indra and Surya got ascendancy over the other gods. According to this story, at first all gods were of equal power. These three gods desiring pre-eminence undertook great penance. Thus, the Fire-god Agni got his tongues which he did not have before. Indra got the great power which he did not have before. Surya became much more brilliant.

In the religious beliefs of the Manipuris, there was the Sky-god in the person of Atya Guru. In Manipuri, *atya* means the sky. According to their traditional belief, it was Atya Guru who created the earth along with living beings—men, animals and the like. A word of caution is however necessary. He created this earth along with living beings under the orders and guidance of the Supreme Being, Guru Shidaba i.e. the Immortal Guru. Evidently, this Manipuri myth was woven long after Dyaus lost his prominence. Dyaus lost this position when the Rig Veda was composed, which was after the Indo-Aryans settled in the land of the Seven Rivers.

The one thousand and seventeen hymns of the Rig Veda give much prominence to Indra, Agni and Surya. They are the triad of the Vedic pantheon. All these three most important gods of the Vedas are worshipped in Manipur also. This leads us to the vital questions how and when Vedic thought reached Manipur.

ARYAN EXPANSION

The Seven Rivers referred to above are the Vitasta (Jhelum), the Chandrabhaga (Chenab), the Iravati (Ravi), the Vipasa (beans), the Shatadru (Sutlej), the Sindhu (Indus) and the Saravati now desiccated but full of water in the Vedic period. After occupying the land of the Seven rivers, the Indo-Aryans pushed off further and further cast. There were armed conflicts among the different Indo-Aryan tribes. It is true, But they, as a race, fought successfully against the Damyus and occupied, one after another, the region of the River Yamuna, the region of the upper course of the Ganga, and the region of the River Sarayu. The River Ganga is mentioned only twice in the Rig Veda—once in the sixth *Mandals* (Book) and once in the tenth *Mandala*—the last *Mandals* of the Rig Veda. The Yamuna and Sarayu are mentioned in the hym called *Nadistuti* in the tenth *Mandala* of the Rig Veda. This proves that towards the end of the Vedic period, the Aryandom reached as far as the River Sarayu in the east.

A major thrust of the Aryan expansion was towards the east along the northern bank of the River Ganga. They pushed on in this way until they reached the region of modern Sahibganj (latitude 26, 15 longitude 87, 39 E), from where the Ganga flows south-eastward. They pushed on along the north-eastern bank of the Ganga until they reached the mouth of the River Surma, which in the Vedic period flowed into the Purva Samudra (the Bay of Bengal). They pushed up the course of the Surma; because it was the mode way of Aryan migration. The ancestors of the Indo-Aryans, it may be remembered, came by following the course of the River Kabul while migrating to India. Following the courses of rivers they came to the banks of the Yamuna and the Ganga. Following the course of the Ganga, they came to the mouth of the River Surma. In those days before the magnetic compass, the safest way of migration without losing direction was by following the courses of rivers.

Panini in his celebrated Sanskrit grammar *Ashtadhyavi,* while explaining a *pratyaya* mentions a region in eastern India called Suxmas (vide Book IV, Pada I, Sutra 170). We identify this place as the region through which the River Surma flows i.e. the district called Sylhet then in India but now in Bangla Desh. According to Panini, there were Kshatriyas in this region. Panini wrote his grammar in north-west India by the 4th century B.C. at the latest. So Aryan expansion in the east reached Sylhet in the 5th century at the latest.

Surma is the name of the lower course of the River Bank i.e. the Surma and the Barak are one and the same river. Now. The River Barak originates in the Senapati district of Manipur. After setting in Sylhet, the Indo–Aryans pushed on further east – by following the course of the Barak, which they called *vakra* i.e. crooked or serpentine. By following the course of the River Barak, they came to the present-day Manipur border. From there they followed the wellknown hill route connecting the Gangetic Valley and China mentioned above and reached to Manipur Valley about the 4th century B.C.

When the Indo-Aryans reached the Manipur Valley, they found that Mongoloids had already peopled the place. Branches of Homo Sapiens are like branches of a river and not branches of a tree. The branches of a tree, once they branch off from the trunk or the bough, never unite. But the branches of a river always unite again if they chance to meet. The Indo-Aryans reaching the Manipur Valley and Mongoloid peoples who had already settled there united paving the way for the formation of Manipuri literature, language and religious beliefs.

HYMN TO INDRA

The Manipuri believed that there was a kingdom above the cloud. Gods lived in it and their king was Soraren. The king of gods was the also the god of rain. He wielded the thunderbolt as his weapon. He corresponds to Indra of the Rig Veda, Zaus of the Greeks and Jupiter of the Romans. A hymn to Soraren reads:

O Soraren Thy abode
Is in the sky;
O king Wieldest thou the thunderbolt;
Strikest thou with un-erring aim.
Earthly kings give into thee
News of the birth of their sons
O Handsome god
Of high heavens!
Givest thou thy royal orders
In the country of gods
Above the sky.
Administrator of justice
Above the clouds!
To these we bow down
Give us prosperity!

In the Vedic age, worshippers offered *soma* juice to Indra, eulogized him and asked him grant success in battles, protection against enemies, birth of sons etc.—boons of temporal nature. In this Manipuri hym also, the worshipper is asking for a temporal boon. The second stanza is about a Manipuri practice. When a son was born to a Manipuri king, royal servants first gave the information to Soraron and then to the earthly king. There was a musical instrument of copper shaped like a horn. A servant of the king held the instrument to his lips, turned his face towards the sky and informed Soraren loudly that a son had been born to the king so and so.

Some old men in rural areas even now refer to Soraren as Father Soraren (means *my father*). Some old women even now call the blue, sky *Soraren.*

HYMNS TO FIRE

A hym to the fire-god reads:
O Fire brought by Poreition!
O Fire brought by Poinaota!
Twin Fire of the Chakpas!
Thou Representative of the Sun!

Poireiton was the leader of a horde of immigrants from Upper Burma who settled in Manipur in the first century A.D. Poinaota was a relative of Poireiton. The Chakpas were a people who inhabitated Manipur from before the first Century A.D. They used fire for baking pottery, offerred burnt offerings to the fire-god to enhance the yield of fields and cremated their dead. What is interesting in this piece of a hymn is the reference to brightly burning fire as the representative of the Sun. In Vedic thought, Fire occurs in three forms. When he is on earth, he is Fire; when he is in water in the sky he is lightning and when he shines in the sky he exists as the Sun. The Vedic Indo-Aryans believed also that after sunset the Sun entered Fire and Fire shone brightly at night. They worshipped Fire both inside and outside the dwelling. Inside the dwelling, they worshipped Fire as the representative of the Sun.

Another Manipuri hymn to Fire reads:

I hold firewood in hand
With inflamable materials;
I burn it in the bosom of fire
Of the south-west segment.
O Fire! Be pleased in thy heart!
And give into me
What I beg of thee.

The Manipuri worhsipped fire in the domestic hearth situated at the middle of the dwelling house. In ancient times, they inserted three iron pegs at the circumference of the hearth. Later, these three iron pegs were replaced by the three legs of an iron tripod. The three legs divided the fire burning in the hearth into three segments—the north-eastern, south-eastern and the south-western which represented the rising sun, the midday sun and the setting sun. The last three lines of the hymn remind us very strongly of the hymns of the Rig Veda to Fire.

HYMNS TO SUN-GOD

We find a few hyms to the Sun-god in Old Manipuri literature. One such hym reads:

> I, a human being,
> Cannot describe in my lay
> The full glory of the immortal Sun
> The chief among gods.
> O Sun! Great Jewel of daytime!
> Thou art Fire giving warmth on Earth's back;
> Give unto me the precious jewel,
> The gift of immortals,
> Which enhances longevity.

The ancient Manipuris did not have many gods, and goddesses. In praising a god, the Manipuris called him the foremost among gods, That is why in praising the Sun, this hym refers to him as the chief among the gods. This was also the practice of the Vedic Indo Aryans. In Sanskrit, *dinamani* (the jewel of daytime) is one of the epithets of the sun. The present hym identifies the sun as fire giving warmth to Earth, which is understandable if we keep in mind Vedic thought, Surya, the sun-god, in his vivifying aspect is called *Savitar* in Vedic Sanskrit. Sayanacharya says that *Savitar* is the sun of early morning which gives longevity. In the present Manipuri hymn, the worshipper is praying for the boon of longevity, which only immortals can grant.

A HYMN TO THE GOD OF DEATH

The Manipuris believed in a god of death. He was Thongaran who ruled over the dead in the underworld. In the Rig Veda we find a few hymns to Yama, the god of death. In Puranic mythyology, he punished the wicked in his different hells according to the gravity of the sins they committed on earth. This is a later concept. We do not find it in *Rig, Yaju* or *Sam.* In Old Manipuri literature also, we do not find this later aspect. A Manipuri hymn to the god of death reads:

O Immorrtal lord Thongaren
Thou dispenser of the destiny
Of the dead and the living!
Skilful thou art in administration
Favouring many a living man
Sealing the fate of many a dying man
Presidest thou over funeral affairs;
Chief of gods! Shut the door of death
And open the door of life!

In Vedic mythology, Yama was the first man who died, and he became the god of death. In Old Manipuri literature we do not find the origin of Thongaran. In the Rig Veda, the worshipper refers to Yama as king of *pitris* i.e the shades of the ancestors (Bookx, Sukt 14 Stanza 1). In stanza 4 of the same *Sukta,* the worshipper addresses Yama as *Kajan* i.e. sovereign. In the Manipuri hym, the worshipper is praying to the god of death to close the door of death and open the door of life. If the god of death closed the door of death and opened the door of life, people on earth would not die and would thus enjoy a long life stanza 14 of the same *Sukta* reads: Offer the oblation of *ghee* to Yama and stand near the altar. Among the gods, it is he who gives long life.

According to Vedic thought, what was the life expectancy of human beings? According to popular belief in the west based on the Bible, the life of man is three score and ten years. According to Vedic thought it is one hundred years. In giving blessings, the Vedic Indo-Aryans said *Shātaṅ Jeevantu Shāradaḥ* (live one hundred years). The Indo-Aryans hoped to live one hundred winters (*shatang himah*). According to the belief of the ancient and medieval Manipuris also, the life of man was one hundred years. In Manipuri mythology of a later age, Thongaren gave a boon to Pombee Luwaoba, a hero, and his wife to live as long as they liked but advised them not to live beyond one hundred years.

MANNER OF WORSHIP

The worship of gods by the ancient Manipuris was uniconic i.e. the worship was without icons. While worshipping Sun-god, they worshipped the visible orb of the sun. In worshipping Fire-god, they threw the oblations into the visible burning fire. In worshipping, Soraren and other gods they just spread a piece of cloth for the god to sit on, invoked the god and imagined that the god had come and taken the allotted seat. There was no need for temples also. If a god was not worshipped at the worshiper's house, he was worshipped in the particular grove sacred to him.

GODDESSES

There were not many goddesses in the Vedic period. We come accord as Prithvi, Ushas, Saraswati, Vach and Indrani. The hyms to Ushas are beautiful poetry. In the hyms to Saraswati, she is sometimes spoken of as the goddess of eloquent speech and sometimes as the river of the same name. The Vedic goddesses are, the whole, not prominent. In Manipuri mythology of the ancient period, we find the Earth-goddess. It is difficult to find other goddesses.

MINOR GODS

In Vedic mythology we come across a minor god named Vastoshpa. He was the god of the dwelling. No evil spirit could enter a dwelling and torment an inmate without his connivance. No thief could speak into a dwelling without his connivance, If a thief wanted to steal anything from inside the dwelling he had to pray to Vastoshpati for granting connivance. If there was a serious illness in the family, the inmates would worship Vastoshpati to grant recovery. The ancient Manipuris had a god of the dwelling with identical functions. So far we do not know what his name was in ancient times; but his present name is Sanamahi.

In the Vedic age, there was also a god named Rudra. He was not a prominent god. We do not know whether he was a pastoral god, but he gradually evolved to become Shiva. Before he was widely worshipped as Shiva he was also known as *Ishan*, which word means the north-east also. The Manipuris have a god named Nogpok with almost identical attributes of Isham. In Manipuri "*nongpok*" means the east. The name of this god is a short for "*nongpok chinkhei*" i.e. *ishan*.

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BOOK REVIEW

S. Shyamkishore Singh

Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt,
The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur: The Cheitharon Kumpapa
Volume 1, 33-1763 CE
Routledge, London and New York, 2005,
Indian reprint, 2012; pp.227+xi
Volume 2, 1764-1843CE
Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd.,
New Delhi, 2009; pp.283+xii

The books under review form major part of a three volume work of English translation of the royal chronicle of Manipur entitled *Cheitharon Kumpapa* written in the indigenous Meetei (Manipuri) script. The third volume has just been published, recently. The learned author late Saroj Nalini A. Parratt is a Manipuri diaspora who settled in England after her marriage to the British scholar Professor John Parratt. These volumes are the results of her painstaking research on the history and culture of the Meetei people of Manipur for more than four decades. Other books and research papers published by her independently, or in collaboration with John Parratt, have exhibited her solid contribution to the understanding of the history, the traditional religion and culture of the Manipuris.

The *Chietharon Kumpapa* is the official royal chronicle which records events concerning the Kings and the ancient kingdom of Manipur (Known in olden days as "*Kangleipak*" or "*Meitrapak*") from 33 CE till the time of the last king in 1955. The author has not only translated the chronicle into English, but she has given a brief account of the chronicle, which is a valuable and authentic document about the history of Manipur, and also given explanatory notes about the technical terms and cryptic expressions in archaic Manipuri. Towards the end of the English translation in these volumes, she has given glossary of difficult words. The salient feature of these volumes is the inclusion of the photocopied texts written in the indigenous (old) Meetei script written originally in hand-made paper with specially made indigenous ink embossed with the royal seal of the last King late Maharaja Bodhachandra Singh.

Chietharon Kumpapa (popularly called "*Chietharol Kumbaba*") is a difficult text written in terse and cryptic prose (incomplete sentences in several places), mostly in old Meeteirol (Manipuri language). It is highly commendable that by dint of painstaking endeavour the scholar has given an authentic translation of the difficult text into English, which is indeed a herculean task. This English rendering of *Cheitharon Kumpapa* is the most authentic translation of the chronicle in a foreign language. Of course, there was a spurious rendering of this chronicle by a Bengali clerk during the British occupancy of Maṇipur in 1891 CE, which was written by order of the then Political Agent Mr Maxwell. This type-written manuscript which was lying in the British Museum, London, has been published by late L. Joychandra Singh under the caption *The Lost Kingdom* (Imphal, 1995). But many of the events recorded in this manuscript are misleading and they do not tally with the original records of the *Cheitharon Kumpapa*.

A transliteration of this chronicle in Bengali script was published in 1967 by the Manipuri Shaitya Parishad under the joint editorship of L. Iboonghal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh. The fourth modified version of the same has been published by Manipuri Shaitya Parishad in 2012. There are copies of *Cheitharon Kumpapa* in the hands of some local scholars, which find slight variations linguistically and content-wise from the official manuscript of the royal palace. It is to her credit that the author retrieved the original manuscript from the Head Punḍit of the royal palace several years ago. Her work is based on this authentic manuscript (facsimiles of the pages of the Mss have been incorporated at the later part of each volume).

Regarding the difficulties she faced, the author writes: "A translation of the Ch.K. into English in a task which is fraught with many difficulties, occasioned both by the nature of the Mss and by the language used by the writers. The language problem affects especially the earlier part of the Ch. K., where archaisms are frequent. Because of the way in which the Meetei script is written-absence of subjects or objects in some sentences, lacking spacing between words, capital letters, punctuation within sentences, paragraphing and headings - it is not always easy to get a sense of the structure of the sentences. The numerals used to indicate the Sakabda year (written in Bengali), and the convention in the mss. of indicating the end of a year by a bold dots with pairs of vertical lines on either side, are of some assistance. In some cases these double vertical lines also appear at the end of a word or a phrase, in which case the phrase has to be understood as a complete sentence. The style of the language is also problematic. Sentences are often very short, cryptic and enigmatic". (Volume 1, Introduction, p.11). The author has admitted that although no translation can adequately convey the complete richness of a language, she has tried as far as possible to reflect the style of the language. A reading of these translations definitely gives us the impression that the author has done her job in a highly commendable way. However, perfection in undertaking such a difficult task is a far cry, and as such, we have our reservations about her interpretation of the meaning of some archaic words, as well as the explanations of a few historical events and cultural practices. Otherwise, the work is of great merit and highly commendable.

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Anjana Chaliha

Daniel P.Sheridan: *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhagavata Purana*

Motilal Banarsidass,
New Delhi, 1986, pp. 150

The book under review consists of nine chapters including the 'introduction' and the 'conclusion'. With penetrating analysis the author shows how as a united scripture, the Bhagavata Purana combines the Vedantic non-dualism and the Vaishnava devotionalism.

Sheridan starts his introductory chapter by discussing how the Bhagavata Purana does very efficiently unite the problem of divine transcendence with that of His immanence in its attempt to solve the problem of the distinction versus identity of God and man. In appreciating words he speaks of the unique method of the Bhagavata Purana where it accommodates a 'both/and' solution to the transcendence and immanence of God in relation to Creation. In this connection let me quote Sheridan, "The Bhagavata's breadth of vision, profundity of insight, and untroubled philosophical naivete allow the historian to witness a great system of belief grappling with the perennial problem of God's transcendence and immanence."(p.2).

The writer presents a critical estimate of the remarks on the *Bhagavata Purana* offered by so many scholars like E.Burnouf, H.H.Wilson, E.Pargiter, T.Hopkins, Larry Shinn, S.Dasgupta, S. Bhattacharya, A.Sarma Biswas, T.S.Rukmani. The aim of Sheriden's study of the book, as he says, is to examine it to understand its religious structure through a 'redaction criticism'. In this very introductory chapter, he tries to fix the date and the unity (unitary authorship) of the scripture on the basis of the finding of many scholars and historians and also on the study of the facts presenting internal evidence by the Purana itself. He discusses the topic of the non-dualism of the Bhagavata. The doctrine is established by a discussion of some of the dialogues contained in the scripture. His discussion of the nature of the Absolute 'with' and 'without' qualities ('saguna' and 'nirguna') is really illuminating. He elaborately discusses the topic of 'maya' from the perspective of the scripture showing its relation with the concept of 'Yogamaya' as well. In support of his thesis, sometimes he takes help of other writings also. Regarding 'maya', he comments, "However, it is clear that the Bhagavata does not use 'maya' in the same sense that Samkara and mayavadins do. The language and similies used are similar, because both drew on the Upanishads and Vedantic materials for their sources". (p. 39)

In the 3rd Chapter, Sheridan discusses the *Samkhya* of the Bhagavata showing its distinction from the Classical *Samkhya.*

The fourth chapter deals with the question of the identity of *Bhagavan* and shows Bhagavata's import to subordinate the concept of Vishnu to that of Krishṇa. He discusses here also the Bhagavata's concepts of the *Avataras.*

The fifth chapter discusses the topic of 'devotion' and shows by elaborate discussions that Bhagavata's teaching of devotion is closely linked with the concept of a personal God who is kind, gracious and compassionate. A discussion of the distinction of devotion from Yoga and rituals is also offered here. He points to the Bhagavata's teaching that the highest goal of Yogic absorption is superceded by devotion, or that 'devotion' transcends 'liberation'.

After showing the need of Bhagavan for devotion, in the next chapter Sheridan discusses Bhagavata's due emphasis given on the concept of the devotee as well. The reality of the devotee must be acknowledged. In this chapter the import of the ecstatic play or the *rasalila* is also discussed with evaluation.

The chapter seven contains the critical estimation of the interpretations of the Bhagavata made by commentators like Madhva, Vallabha and the school of Caitanya.

The eighth chapter discusses the religious structure of the *Bhagavata,* its non-dualism as well as the difference-in-identity trends.

In the chapter nine, the writer presents his concluding remarks that the love of the devotee for God is primary in the Bhagavata. He gives a comparative assessment of the Bhagavata devotionalism with those of Christianity, Islam and Mahayana Buddhism. He states, "The Bhgagavata alongwith most of the devotional schools of Hinduism stand over against these three devotional traditions by its emphasis on the non-duality of God and the devotee. The identity is based upon a conception of 'material' causality which is not found in the other traditions. This emphasis gives the Bhagavata's type of devotion a distinctive quality and tone quite different from that of the other traditions."

We find that those who are interested in the study of the *Vedanta* and the *Bhagavata* will get enough materials in the book under review. The book is scholarly and authentic.

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